UNITED NATIONS

Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.2 (C)
28 November 2000

ENGLISH ONLY

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Fourth session
Bonn, 11-22 December 2000
Item 7 (a) and (b) of the provisional agenda[1]

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

(a) REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES OF REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

(b) REVIEW OF THE REPORT ON PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA

Addendum

COMPILATION OF SUMMARIES OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES[2]

Note by the secretariat

1. By its decision 4/COP.3, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to undertake, at its fourth session, the review of reports on the implementation of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including reports on the participatory process and on experiences gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of national action programmes.

2. Pursuant to decision 11/COP.1, the secretariat was requested to compile the summaries of reports submitted by affected country Parties and submit the compilation to the Conference of the Parties for consideration and for any action the COP may wish to take. Decision 11/COP.1 also provided procedures and formats for reporting to the COP and required, in particular, a summary of the national reports, not to exceed six pages.

---

[1] ICCD/COP(4)/1.

[2] Reproduced without formal editing.

3. The present document contains the summaries of national reports submitted by nine country Parties from the Latin American and the Caribbean Region. These are: Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Uruguay and Venezuela. The secretariat will also make this compilation of summaries available on its Web site (www.unccd.int) for wider circulation.

CONTENTS

	Page
Nicaragua	3
Panama	9
Paraguay	14
Peru	15
Saint Kitts and Nevis	19
Saint Lucia	23
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	26
Uruguay	27
Venezuela	28

NICARAGUA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Even though being one of the few Central American countries that still contains a considerable extension of forest land, Nicaragua experiments a severe process of desertion and degradation of its grounds with an annual deforestation rate of 120,000 hectares per year, which accelerates the loss of natural resources and the bio-diversity, provoking scarcity of superficial and underground waters and the definite erosion of the grounds.

This situation of severe environmental deterioration is due to causes like the overexploitation of the grounds, unsustained agricultural and forest practices, forest fires and agricultural burning, added to droughts and hurricanes and a high level of poverty demolishing at the productive activity and rural unemployment. With the passing of Hurricane Mitch in October of 1998, the environment suffered additional damage that worsened the existing precarious conditions.

Having analysed the environmental situation's background, the Government of Nicaragua, in the framework of the Summit of the Earth celebrated in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and from the Capacity 21 Programme, ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertion (UNCCD) in October of 1997 with the help of the international community. It is arranged to cooperate in the implementation of measures that the problem demands.

Meanwhile, the main objective of the current National Report is the accomplishment of the lineaments suggested by the Conference of the Parts (COP 1, Rome, 1997), and also to show countries Parts of the Convention in the Fight Against Desertion, Nicaragua's situation regarding the adopted measures for the implementation of the UNCCD at a national level and to supply an evaluation of the reached progress, in the application of the Convention's objectives.

I..1 THE COUNTRY'S GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

The Republic of Nicaragua is located between the Republics of Honduras and Costa Rica, between the latitudes 10E45'N and 15E15'N and the longitudes 83E00'W and 88E00'W. It is the largest country (130,682Km^2, being 120,349Km^2 of firm land) and the least populated (around 4.7 million habitants) of the region, with an annual growth rate of 2.9 per cent. The country is divided into 150 municipalities that form 15 Departments and 2 Autonomous Regions.

I..1.1 ECOLOGICAL REGIONS AND HYDROLOGIC VALLEYS

Having in mind the following ecological factors: geology, topography, climate (temperature and humidity), ground and vegetation, to facilitate the study of the vegetation, the country is divided into the following four Ecological Regions.

THE PACIFIC REGION, is the most populated (19 per cent of territory and 60 per cent of the national population). It concentrates most of the agricultural and industrial activities and possesses the deepest and most fertile grounds of the country, which originates the highest demand of water for irrigation, domestic and industrial consumption. The rainy season lasts six months and 67 per cent of the precipitation is presented practically in three months. This region contains 50 per cent of the best grounds and it concentrates 99 per cent of the highest agricultural development areas, generating 66 per cent of the country's agricultural VBP, mainly in products like cotton, sugar, rice, sorghum and bananas. It is also the region with the most stable territorial structure, contributing 79 per cent the national IGP.

THE NORTHERN-CENTRAL REGION, second in importance concerning population density (39 per cent of the territory and 35 per cent of the population, most of it rural), it presents a mountainous topography, it is where the main rivers of the country begin. It has more superficial and less fertile grounds than the Pacific Region. It presents a variety of climates that go from a cool humid climate to a semi-dry climate and experiences a rainy season a lot like the Pacific Region, affected by a lack of aquifer formations that store and feed the currents in the dry seasons. It generates 19 per cent of the national IGP and 33 per cent of the agricultural VBP (cattle, coffee, basic grains and tobacco) and most of the forestry production.

THE CENTRAL REGION, is characterized and defers from the others for being a transaction zone between the vegetation of the ecological regions one and two of the Pacific and Northern-central, as well as for the Ecological Region of the Atlantic. The climate is warm and humid in the higher parts. The average annual temperature is about 25EC in the low parts and from 18E to 24EC in the high parts. This region has an extension of about 20,531 Km^2, with a longitude of approximately 450Km between Rio Coco in the north and Lake Nicaragua in the south, with an average width of 45Km, being 17Km it's narrowest part and 75Km it's widest. In this region there are lands of considerable height that alternate with plains and hills that motivate a great diversity of floristic composition.

In the Central and Pacific regions there is a high variability in the climate. The frequency and harshness of the droughts vary in function of the occurrence of EL NIÑO (ocean-atmospheric phenomenon of climatic alteration on great scale).

THE ATLANTIC REGION (42 per cent of the territory and 5 per cent of the population), it's characterized for its humid tropical forest climate with low and fragile grounds, and a high rainy precipitation that varies between 9 months in the north and approximately 11 months in the south, presenting the highest proportion of water in the country. Its economy is less developed than the Pacific and Central regions of the country, supplying only 2 per cent of the IGP and 1 per cent of the gross value agricultural production (GVP), although it generates 89 per cent of the national fishing and most of the timber production of the country is extracted from its forests, where the richest bio-diversity of the country is concentrated on.

HYDROGRAPHIC VALLEYS

Besides the ecological divisions, the country is divided into 21 hydrographic valleys, that at the same time are subdivided into two large variants: the one from the Atlantic Ocean or Caribbean Sea that covers approximately 90 per cent of the national territory and the one from the Pacific that covers the remaining 10 per cent. The equivalent plate of annual average precipitation is of 224mm, with a national surface runoff of about 5500m^3/seg. However, as mentioned earlier, these resources are specially distributed in an irregular form: 96 per cent of the national surface runoff drains toward the Atlantic and only 4 per cent goes to the Pacific. In a way that in the Pacific and Centre the currents aren't sustained much in a permanent manner, and the existence of ephemeral currents is very common.

I..2 DESCRIPTION OF THE DRY ZONES OF THE COUNTRY

To describe the dry zones of the country, we part from the classification of the forest zonal ecosystems, given that these zones are subjects of variable climates, in a way that its existence depends on the influence of factors like the humidity maintained by the average contributions of annual pluvial precipitation, consistent with patterns of local, zonal or regional distribution.

The dry zones are found in seven out of the fifteen departments of the country representing 15 per cent of the national territory, in where 50 per cent of the population lives. The dry zones are distributed mainly in the ecological regions of the Pacific and Centre, possessing a height limit no greater than 500 masl (metres above sea level) and covering a surface of approximately 10,000 to 16,400 Km^2, divided in two parts:

A dry warm zone, with temperatures between 26E and 29EC, a precipitation between 750 and 1200 mm and a rainy season that goes from May to October, with an altitude that goes from 0 to 500 masl. It is characterized for having forest land, and at the same time it possesses species that indicate drought, like guayacan, escobillo, nacascol and brazil.

A warm semi-humid zone, which is distributed in the same way as the ecological zones I and II, with the same altitude of 0 to 500 masl and similar temperatures between 26E and 28EC, but with a varying precipitation of between 1,200 and 1,900 mm.

I..3 SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Nicaragua, according to the Human Development Report of 1999, is located on the 121st place from a total of 147 nations, with an internal gross product of less than US$2000 per capita. It is estimated that the poverty and the extreme poverty affect at least 50 per cent of the population especially in the rural zones where the level of poverty reaches 75 per cent.

In the last ten years, the country has had an economical growth of an average of 2.4 per cent, with the third activity that has the greatest relative importance in the attribution of the formation of the IGP. Due to the natural physical context of the country, socio-economic development has been based on agricultural and cattle activities and the exploitation of the forests. The main incomes of the country have been sustained in the exportation of traditional products (60 per cent), complemented by the exportation of non-traditional agricultural products and by industrial products, manufactured in the free trade zones (40 per cent).

The amounts of the direct foreign inversions ascended from US$35 million in 1993 to US$95 million in 1998 and were located mainly in commercial activities, tourism, bank services, construction and in free trade zones, with a lack of participation in the agricultural, industrial, and agribusiness productive sectors.

Hurricane Mitch, which destroyed Central America in October 1998, has been the worst natural catastrophe of the century in the region. It destroyed a great part of Nicaragua's north zone affecting 90 out of the 150 municipalities. The totals of the material damage present more than US$900 million (94 per cent related to the loss in capital and 6 per cent in production). The material losses were mainly in housing, roads, electricity, potable water, communications, health, education and agriculture.

In this context, the municipalities in the dry zones, are characterized particularly for having a population with a high degree of poverty, they are dedicated in the exploitation of remnants of existing forests for the establishment of sub-existing agriculture, which is the main element in the degradation of the grounds. In this sense, the incomes generated by its production are very low, as a consequence of the adverse ecological conditions in that they are found and having a limited level of development in the natural production of energetic species, destined for domestic consumption and some woody species with a high economic value. The population, when suffering the effects of degradation of the earth, in their places of origin, lose interest in cultivating their parcels, and are obligated in seeking shelter in the

cities, where they generate other social problems that affect the population in general.

Nicaragua is one of the few countries in Central America that still maintains a considerable extension of forest land - from pine trees, low tropical humid forests and dry tropical forests - to misty jungles. Lands with forest vocation cover approximately 6.2 million acres, from which 1.8 million have vocation for being conserved and 4.4 million for having a sustained production.

Nevertheless, it is estimated that these potentials have been submitted to a deforestation that reaches a gross rate of 100,000 hectares per year. The 1980s were a favourable period for this resource, because the rate decreased due to the bellicose conflict. Increasing drastically in the 1990s due to the activities of colonization, for the distribution of the land to groups of peasants, in extensions of approximately 150,000 hectares per year. In the last three years, this digit has been reduced to the order of 100,000 to 120,000 acres.

Given in Nicaragua, like in most tropical countries, firewood is the main use of the forest; this is another factor that has influenced the process of deforestation. This activity represents more than 12 times the consumption of the timber industry.

On the other hand, in 1983, the annual consumption of wood used as domestic fuel was ascending to 3.7 million cubic metres (2.6 million ton, 690kg/m^3) being the consumption per habitant of 0.85 tons per year.

In 1990, firewood represented 55 per cent of the total of the consumption of energy, in comparison with other sources of energy like vegetal carbon with 1 per cent and the petroleum derivatives with 27 per cent.

It is important to mention than more than 90 per cent of the consumed energy proceeding from natural forests come from the remnants of forests in the dry zone, where some of the important woods or high power heat producing species are found in an accelerated process of disappearance.

Concerning the timber industry, there is an estimate of 76 active saw mills in the country, with a capacity of about 300,000 m^3 of wood: 9 companies of second transformation, 41 pine processing companies, 50 companies that process forest wood, making a total of 100 industries. The production in 1990 was between 70 to 96 m^3, with an idle capacity of 70 per cent. The sawmills in general are of small scale, with a maximum capacity of 5,000m^3 per year.

INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION

One of the first steps for the Implementation of the UNCCD has been the confirmation of the National Coordination Organ (NCO), structured by representatives of state institutions and the civil society, to promote the activities and support the focal point and its technical team, facilitating basic information in the discipline of interest, even with out having a juridical personae or an assigned potential budget. It has to be mentioned that due to Hurricane Mitch, this process was interrupted due to a drastic change of priorities and it wasn't until the second half of 1999 that the process was continued, starting the Country Study on Desertion in Nicaragua.

In continuance the description of the developed actions from the initial period to the present date.

I..4 CONSULTATIONS WITH STATE INSTITUTIONS

With the purpose of strengthening the work of the Convention, meetings with MARENA's department delegates are developed with the objective of explaining what the Convention consists of, and also identifying relevant elements that can be used as reference, on the deterioration of the ecosystem in their territories.

In the same line, a process of consultation is started with diverse national institutions related to the subject, among these we find the National Forest Institute, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest and the Nicaraguan Institute of Territorial Studies. The services of INETER were contracted in June of 1998 for the execution of The Classification Map on Available Humidity in Nicaragua, using the Hergreave method, presenting as a result the identification of zones sensitive to desertion. INETER is also obligated to facilitate information on Nicaragua, which is helpful in finding desert-like zones.

On 15 May 1998 the first national meeting of the Government concerning the Convention was upheld, with representatives of the aforementioned institutions with the purpose of presenting the Convention and to reach an agreement on the next steps to follow. In this occasion there was participation from the Convention's technical advisers in the Fight Against Desertion and Drought.

I..5 MEETINGS WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY

The involvement of NGOs and other organizations of the civil society in the activities of planning, sensitization, start and continuance, mobilization of resources and the evaluation of the Convention is considered primordial. The objective is to count on the focal NGOs in each one of the departments so that they can work on the planning, in coordination with government delegations.

A first contact was made on 3 March 1998 in coordination with The National Office of the PNUD, being present environmental NGOs. The objective was to sensitize potential doers in the subject of desertion and to select the NGO that would act as a representative in the first Central American Encounter In the Fight Against Desertion, realized among the assistants, the present NGOs decided to select a temporary representative, the NGO Augusto C. Sandino Foundation (FACS), that participated in an active form in the meeting.

On 6 May 1998, the first National Meeting of the Civil Society on the Convention was summoned, with the participation of NGOs that work on activities related to the subject, to present the Convention and the related activities to its implementation, to select the NGOs' focal points in the affected departments, and to introduce the International Net of NGOs on Desertion (RIOD).

At this meeting it was agreed to meet with NGOs working in the department of Esteli. This meeting took place in the city Esteli on 18 August 1998 where the Convention and a proposal of activities to develop were presented, to begin the job in this department as a pilot of the Convention.

I..6 METHODOLOGICAL WORKSHOPS

Subsequent to the activities indicated before, five departmental workshops were developed in the framework of the Country Study, with the object of sensitization the sectors and to obtain information on the issue. The seats of the events were the cities of Esteli, Teustepe, Matagalpa, Jinotega and Chinandega where representatives of the bordering cities and municipalities with the same drought problems attended. The development of the workshops was possible due to the attribution of the General Direction of Territorial Coordination, at the request of MARENA that *has a wide control over the agencies* of the institution.

On 5 April 2000 a National workshop on Desertion was realized; representatives of the Civil Society of municipalities in the dry zone of the country and delegates of MARENA, MAGFOR, INAFOR, CONADES, the Legislative Assembly, NGOs and other institutions related to the subject assisted. The workshop's objective was to make known the Country Study, to discuss the proposal of a National Action Plan to enrich and establish an exchange of opinions and to achieve a consensus on the need of a NAP.

All these workshops have counted with the participation of different key administrators in the territories: institutional, municipal city halls, environmental NGOs, women's organizations and other civilian society organization delegates. It is important to mention that there was also the participation of a lady specialist in subjects of the same kind, demonstrating the principles that this method is based on and helping to understand the problems of women in the fight against desertion.

Conferences on the subject were also realized, given by state institution technicians or projects that worked locally on the dry zones, followed by a period of questions and answers about the exposition. This motivated the debate on the subject of desertion. The previous, permitted the participants to clear up some doubts on the subject and to share opinions about the causes and effects of the indicated problem. Documentation and articles on the subject were also handed out to all the participants.

Another important activity that was realized, were the contacts of Nicaragua's focal points with all the delegates of other member countries in the exchange of experiences in relation with the national reports, the elaboration of the NAP and the implementation of the UNCCD, in their respective countries. For these contacts the meetings of the Parties were taken advantage of.

I..7 RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The obtained results to the present date are the following:

- The Country Study was elaborated on the desertion of Nicaragua, it counts on basic information on the dry zones; it will serve as a work document that can be enriched, and that includes the fundamental process of implementation of the UNCCD;
- A series of workshops on the dry zones will be developed, until concluding with the National workshop in April of 2000.
- A statistic base was established with cartographic information of Nicaragua's dry zones.

I..8 NATIONAL FINANCE

Even though Nicaragua still doesn't count with a National Fund for the Fight Against Desertion and Drought, the Government has made efforts with its own budget and with support from the UNDP, for the development of all the activities implemented up to date.

I..9 CONCLUSIONS

The developed activities in 1998 were very important, the process of spread on the Convention was started and the goals to reach for the Fight Against Desertion.

Contacts with NGOs and with government institutions sensible to the subject were established. However, there was an interruption in the implementation of the UNCCD in Nicaragua, due to the Hurricane Mitch in October 1998, and also because of the lack of institutional and financial

capacity to assign in a professional that could support the focal point in permanent manner.

With the support of the PNUD and the government, the process of implementation is continued through MARENA, in August 1999, obtaining as a result a series of consultations and workshops in the dry zones ending with a national workshop which received the proper relevance. Today we count with a Country Study and a proposal of components for the National Action Programme (NAP), that were introduced to consult on 5 April 2000. It is important to show that for the realization of the national workshop, the secretary of the UNCCD, covered part of the inversion budget.

PANAMA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of Panama is located in the Southern end of the Central American Isthmus, in the Northern Hemisphere. Panama's boundaries are: to the North with the Atlantic Ocean; to the East with the Republic of Colombia and to the South with the Pacific Ocean and the Republic of Costa Rica.

Panama's has a continental land extension of 75,517 Km^2., and a population of 2,674,490 inhabitants. The topography is mainly of low lands and hills of less than 700 mts. of altitude (70 per cent of the national territory). The Pacific and Atlantic coasts have a total length of 1,700.6 and 1,287.7 km., respectively. Due to the Isthmus narrow conditions, low elevations, geographic location and coastal extensions, it offers excellent conditions as a maritime country.

Panama has a unitary, republican, democratic and representative Government. Its territory comprises the territorial surface, territorial waters, subsoil and airspace, is divided politically and administratively into 9 provinces, 67 districts, 549 precincts and 4 Indian territories.

The Panamanian Isthmus has five types of climates: tropical very humid, tropical humid, and tropical dry, predominant of the lowlands; in the highlands the climate is predominantly humid and mild, and mild and very humid. There are two definite climatic seasons, the dry season, which starts from mid-December to April, and the rainy season that extends from May to December.

There is a region of the country known as the 'Dry Arch', where the dry season extends up to seven consecutive months. This area covers approximately 240,000 hectares. It has important inland cities, with a total population of 250,000 inhabitants, who suffer the rigorous process of desertic conditions.

The environmental and hydrographic watersheds degradation becomes quite evident in the subtle and shrewd desertic conditions that prevail in the Dry Arch of Panamá, where there is an extensive exploitation of the subsoil waters, and which rates of extraction and availability are unknown.

Likewise, the proliferation of dangerous events such as floodings and overflows during the rainy season, such as those that occurred in the City of Panama and capital cities of different provinces, resulting in the loss of human lives, millions of Balboas in material and agricultural damages; the progressive destruction of the hydric regulation capacities of the national hydrographic watersheds, such as the Canal hydrographic watershed, Bayano, La Villa, Santa Maria and Chiriqui Grande, Calmito, Pacora and Chiriqui Viejo, where we have a report of soil layer loss of 3 centimetres, a soil of great fertility in the highlands of Chiriqui.

The country, in general, lacks a specific regulation for the handling and conservation of soils, and the hydrographic watershed, which results in an

inefficient environmental action, insofar as to technical personnel, infrastructures, physical resources and budgets to support the limited personnel. Currently, the principal causes for soil degradation are soil erosion, resulting from the loss of vegetation surface layers, or deforestation, the application of obsolete production practices and lack of soil conservation measures.

On the other hand, the process of housing developments on land that is suitable for farming, agricultural-industrial activities and cattle breeding. Also, the fact that farmers and cattlemen use fire, chemical fertilizers and pesticides; in addition, the peasants utilization of scraping and burning practices, indiscriminately, as farming methods. This is a major problem in the majority of the Pacific slopes, with greater intensity in the highlands of Chiriqui, where the loss of soil is greater than 200/ton/per year. Chiriqui's East sector, Veraguas North sector, Los Santos, Herrera, Panamá West sector, Bayano's Basin, and Darien's West sector. In the Atlantic slopes there is an increasing process of soil deterioration in the upper and lower coast of the Province of Colón. Among the actions to pursue, we identify the loss of soil, erosion and sedimentation. For this purpose, the Government created the National Environmental Authority, the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and other institutions.

In conclusion, this situation has created an irreversible degradation of 27 per cent of the country's soil, and is deeply-rooted in the Dry Arch region of the country because of its fragility and disproportionate impact in the environment, thus creating a growing process of desertic conditions characterized by acute droughts that result in losses to the domestic and economic activities of the communities.

The environmental protection in Panama is based on disperse regulations, in addition to the weakness of the institutions, and lack of financial and human resources. These limitations prevented the adequate application of existent environmental policies to solve the country's basic ecological system problems.

In response to the need of organizing and unifying a national environmental policy, and an efficient system to face the national environmental problems, the Government enacted a General Environmental Law on 1 July 1998. This law defines the basic principles of the environmental policy and, creates the National Environmental Authority (Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente-ANAM). Thus, ANAM assumes the responsibilities and functions previously held by the National Institute of Natural Resources (INRENARE) which disappears with the creation of the new Institution.

ANAM gives priority to the regulatory process focusing its efforts in the most sensitive environmental actions to comply with the environmental policy, giving priority to the areas of major progress, or areas that are strategically relevant for a harmonic development of the environmental process. In this capacity, we identify three areas to initiate the regulation process:

(a) The Evaluating Process for Environmental Impact;

(b) The procedures to establish environmental quality norms and maximum allowable limits; and,

(c) The mechanisms for citizens participation.

For these three areas, the regulation project is underway and, likewise, the consultation process, through workshops and meetings with the social sections involved. The Official Gazette No. 24,014 of 21 March 2000 establishes the regulation procedures to prepare the norms for environmental quality and maximum permissible limits; also, the formation and function of the environmental consultation committees, through *Official Gazette No. 24,015, of* 22 March 2000 that regulates the process of Environmental Impact Evaluation.

The General Environmental Law compiles and integrates the environmental legislation which was scattered in the different ministries, institutions and authorities. Nevertheless, we recognize the fact that there are certain legal loopholes, duality of functions, and conflicts of authority. These factors limit the full application of the Law in certain key sectors of the environmental action; which also concentrates the majority of the environmental concerns of the Panamanian society, as reported by the National Environmental Strategy.

Many of the conflicts could be resolved by strengthening the institutional coordination, encompassed within the Environmental Intra-institutional System or the Web for Environmental Section Units. Nevertheless, on a mid-term period, it will be necessary to have a greater environmental policy integration with sectional policies and the development of tools that determine the different institutions roll and functions, and the strengthening of cocrdinating mechanisms.

Panama has ratified, since 1963 up to the present, 21 Agreements or Global Protocols related to environmental subjects and 10 Regional Agreements since 1954, among which we can mention the following:

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- Convention on Biological Diversity;
- Convention for the Establishment of an Interamerican Commission for Tropical Tuna Fish;
- Constitutional Agreement of the Central American Commission for the Environment and Development.

Among the activities adopted to implement the Convention on Desertification is the implementation of workshops for regional consultations in critical areas of the country, such as the highlands of Chiriqui and the Dry Arch of the country in the central provinces. Workshops at national level in the City of Panama. For these events we had participants from government institutions, non-government institutions, several production sectors, independent farmers and representatives of the civil society.

The tools identified in the Country's Consultation Workshops to attack the problems of desertification and degradation of the land are the following:

1. Awareness and Environmental Education;
2. Financing and Urgent Investments;
3. Legal Context;
4. Attack on Poverty;
5. Citizen Participation;
6. Scientific Studies and Investigation;
7. Intra-institutional Coordination and Institutional Strengthening;
8. Integrate a new methodology for Sustainable Development in the economic growing process.

Also in the consultation workshops, specific recommendations were presented on the actions to implement each subject of the National Programme against the Desertification and Degradation of the Soil.

Environmental Education

It is important to implement a Plan for Environmental Education both formally and informally, at elementary, high school and university level. Also, addressed to the different sectors of the society, incorporating the subject of the fight against desertic conditions to the different ongoing projects.

Financing and Urgent Investments

Within the specific actions related to this subject, it is important to propose projects that allow the identification of critical areas and the actions required for their reduction. These programmes should also cover women in rural areas, since they carry out multiple tasks in their homes, plus farming, and cattle breeding. For these purposes they encounter major difficulties in obtaining credits and any other type of support.

Legal Scope

As a result of the national consultation regarding the necessary legal actions to adopt, there are relevant issues to consider such as, existent legal loopholes, definition of institutional authority and enforcement of the regulations in the Republic of Panamá, including application of exemplary sanctions to violations of the Environmental Law. The consultation also highlights the development of training and updating for the government authorities and local governments to create their awareness of the environmental laws and their enforcement.

Attack on Poverty

We must begin by creating a vision of the programmes and integrated plans we require to attack poverty. These programmes must consider training for the affected populations in sustainable development methods, since the problem of desertic conditions cannot be resolved by just applying technical measures. We must incorporate within the national policies and strategies for programming, the fight against desertic conditions and soil degradation. In this sense, it is important to highlight the synergetic effects of other conventions, such as Climate Change and Biodiversity, that would allow to extend coverage and efficiency for the proposed measures.

Citizens Participation

As one of the main aspects, we suggest the adoption of a modern and participative system for environmental action, where the participation of the civil population is guaranteed in the fight against soil degradation, desertic conditions and drought.

Studies and Scientific Investigations

It is important to implement Title IV, Chapter VII of Law #41, the General Environmental Law, which refers to the Technological and Scientific Investigations indicated in articles 51 and 52, that states as follows:

- Article 51. The Government will promote environmental scientific and technological investigation programs, both public and private, to have greater elements of judgment in the decision-making process for national environment.

- Article 52. The National Environmental Authority shall coordinate the preparation and execution of the permanent programme for technological and scientific investigation, oriented towards environmental actions and natural resources.

Inter-Institutional Coordination and Strengthening of Institutions

It is suggested that the relevant parties which are the communities, government organizations, non-government organizations, local governments, and donating organizations, coordinate and cooperate with the development of programmes and their implementation, as well as the creation of a coordinating

commission to follow up and observe advances, problems and results based on the Action Plan.

Integrate a New Style of Sustainable Development to the Economic Growing Process

As a general policy of State and recognizing that the attack to the problems of desertic conditions and degradation of the environment is a direct attack to the problem of poverty, it is essential to incorporate to the development of national policies and strategies of the Government, the Action Program for the Fight Against Desertic Conditions and Soil Degradation.

To support the Convention implementation, considering the subject of desertic conditions, we do not handle budgets, nor financial contributions. Nevertheless, within the National Environmental Plan that ANAM executes with financing of the Inter-American Development Bank (BID), there is the component of Environmental ordinance to be executed within three years, which may be considered as an action related to the subject of Desertic Conditions.

According to the General Environmental Law, it is the National Environmental Authority (ANAM) that prepares at the end of each government period, a Report of the Environmental Situation of the Country. This Environmental Report may be considered as the Governments' mechanism to follow-up and evaluate the environmental actions in Panamá.

The operation of the National System for Environmental Information has been proposed, and was created under Law No. 41, which has the objective of gathering, systematizing and distributing environmental information of the Government between government organizations, as well as public and private organizations. In this manner the capacity of the country is strengthened and is able to produce impact indicators.

Poverty is broadly extended in the country, covering 37 per cent of the Panamanian population. Within this bracket 27 per cent live in extreme poverty. Several studies have shown that extreme poverty is concentrated in 24 districts (a third of the total districts that conform the country), distributed in the Atlantic Coast, the Indian areas of Chiriquí, Bocas del Toro, Veraguas and Darién.

In Panamá, the growth rate of the national production, measured according to the Gross National Product (GNP), has descended in every decade after the 1960s. During the 1990s the growth rate also descended. The GNP rate grew 4.4 per cent in 1997. Yet, the social problems have not been mitigated. Panama is in need of a vigorous growth rate in order to face the increasing needs of the population and to up-grade their income per-capita.

In the Latin American context, Panamá is one of the countries with more resources destined to education. The importance that the Government gives to this instrument of social promotion is shown with the education expenses that in average represents 4.9 per cent of the GNP and 10 per cent of public expense. Nevertheless, the system still shows inequity symptoms, such as low quality and inefficiency, which act negatively in the fight against poverty, unemployment and social margination.

The inequity of the system is reflected in the low coverage rates observed in elementary and high school education, especially in the rural areas, urban marginated areas, and Indian areas.

PARAGUAY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of the Paraguay is divided by the river Paraguay in two natural regions, very differed environmentally, the Oriental Region and the Western Region or Chaco. Political and administratively, the territory is divided in seventeen Departments. In the Oriental Region, the annual half temperature oscillates between 21' C and 23' C in the Western Region, the annual half temperature is of 24'C.

One of the most eloquent qualitative parameters in this expansion constitutes it the quick deforestation process, causing a decrease in 32.22 per cent, existing in 1945 with 8.805.000 has at 2.837.718 there is in the I finish monitored carried out in 1997, (Map of Forestry DOA/BGR). The insert of the country inside the UNCCD is given starting from 1997, by means of the ratification of the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD) and the promulgation of the Law 970/97 through the Executive Power. In this sense it is of standing out that the desertification like a current natural phenomenon presents little representativeness in the country, I did not seize the degradation of lands that is the result of an inappropriate interaction in the practices of qualification of lands, practical cultural and production systems that are causing erosion problems and compactación of floors, low fertility, among others. However at the national level, considering the presence of possible areas, the Western Region or Paraguayan Chaco, it is considered as the most susceptible to degradation processes that of not having mechanisms of alert or adapted forecast would rot to future to favour the formation and advance of the desertification like such.

Inside the normative mark, the promulgation of Environmental Laws, they have been another of the opportune factors that they facilitated the protection, preservation and conservation of the natural resources.

By means of the Undersecretary's of State of Natural Resources active action and environment (SSERNMA) he/she has strengthened the cooperation between government's organisms and ONG´s of the whole country. This cooperation defines the implementation of programs and plans and improve the strategies of environmental administration, inside which the fight for the degradation of lands and its effects on the environment takes to the desertification and drought like probable parameters of action.

In spite of the incipient preponderance of the environmental sector in the Paraguay, the development politicians included inside a strategic plan of social development are guided toward the sostenibilidad of the same one.

In this sense they are diverse the programmes and projects of national and international character that have several components of environmental education diversified in several areas of the national territory that point to an integral attendance of indigenous communities, colonists mennonitas, Paraguayans, etc., trying to make aware the appropriate use of the natural resources for arid or semi-arid conditions.

Inside the conditions climate of the Oriental Region, the methodology of environmental education is more guided to the prevention of the degradation of lands and conservation of floors.

Among the achievements reached in the last years they figure the environmental introduction of the thematic one (legislation, rules and punitive, Treaties and International Agreements, etc.), elaboration and political development of structures - administrative suitable regarding the handling and conservation of natural resources, as the future secretary or Ministry of the Atmosphere.

The National Office of Gender, created in the year 1999 inside the MAG, is avocado to the woman's insert and its environment to the environmental problem of the country.

The elaboration of the BREAD so far has not been able to be taken ahead, mainly due to the administrative great political instability that the Paraguay has spent in the last years, forcing the responsible technicians to restart in several opportunities concientización processes to level of Ministers and Vice ministers, local Governments and other dependences involved in the thematic one. Inside the Programme Subregional of Sustainable Development of the Great American Chaco is come carrying out a series of consultations and exchanges of information tenderness to consolidate this vast American region.

Inside the activities foreseen to give pursuit to the thematic of the CCD/PY is the elaboration of documents technical control and pursuit thank you wing international technical cooperation.

The subject or susceptible own evaluation of areas to desertification will be carried out based on the control of the deforestation for both regions (Oriental and Western) in the sense that not alone the established parameters for approaches of selection of arid or semi-arid areas will be preponderant, but also the great influence that it represents the degradation of lands in tropical and subtropical areas that constitute a serious danger for the advance of these processes enunciated in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought for the conditions of tne Paraguay (UNCCD).

PERU

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Concise and compatible information about the progress and restrictions of the implementation process of the UNCCD during the period 1996 to 2000, is presented.

References for its elaboration:

1. Guidelines for the elaboration of the National Reports for the implementation of the UNCCD (November 1999).

2. PAN PERU 1996, document elaborated in a participatory way, under the UNCCD conception (from bottom to top) and conceived as a process plan and not as a document plan. Four (4) years later, it has been evaluated, at a national level, in 3 regional workshops (North, Centre and South) with participation of 150 representatives of governmental and private institutions, universities, specialists, local governments, communities and other base organisms of the population.

ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD IN PERU: 1996-2000

Strategies and Priorities set in the Context of Plans and/or Politics of Sustainable Development

Peru has national plans that enclosed the UNCCD-Peru, like the National Strategy for conservation and Sustainable Development (1992) elaborated by the National Commission for Environment and Development (CNUMAD), also a Focus Strategy of Combat Against the Extreme Poverty (June 96) and a Structural Frame of Environmental Management (MEGA, by its abbreviation in Spanish), formulated and in process of implementation.

The most immediate reference among the plans elaborated by Peru before the functioning of the UNCCD, is the National Plan of Action Against the Desertification (PNACD, by its abbreviation in Spanish), elaborated under the

direction of the actual National Focal Point for the Combat Against the Desertification: INRENA. Nevertheless, the plans date from the 60' years, with the conformation of the National Commission of Arid Zones (CONAZA, by its abbreviation in Spanish).

Institutional Measurements Adopted to Implement the Convention

In this aspect, it has to be emphasized that the National Coordination Organ (OCN, by its abbreviation in Spanish) has not been created yet. INRENA, as National Focal Point (PFN, by its abbreviation in Spanish), has assumed the actions of combat against the desertification.

Institutionally, no important actions have been realized after the firm of the UNCCD by the Peruvian State (1995); nevertheless, there is a reactivation of the Regional Associations of Combat Against the Desertification and the starting of the Regional Environmental Commissions (CAR, by its abbreviations in Spanish), which will create favourable institutional conditions for the next stage of the PAN 96.

PAN-PERU 96 is not explicitly included within the great national projects (PRONAMACHCS, FONCODES, ...); nevertheless, there are coordinations to join efforts.

Support Participatory Process to Prepare and Implement the National Action Programmes (PAN, by its abbreviation in Spanish)

In the elaboration of the PAN PERU 96 participated representatives of the North and South Regional Association (Costa and Sierra, in both cases), and of the national governmental and private institutions too. Nevertheless, between the period 1996 and 2000 the mentioned associations did not functioned. In this period, some meetings have been realized at local, national and regional level (V GRULAC 1999), in which priorities in the combat against the desertification have been established, at local level still. And, with respect to information and education, there are problems of information flow (lack of a information system about desertification) and deficiency of diffusion about desertification in schools and universities in a explicit way, because now the theme is treated but like degradation of ecosystems.

The participation of women in this process is not identified, nor quantified; there are isolated efforts, but we cannot talk of something representative.

Support Process of Consulting to the Preparation and Implementation of the PAN-PERU 96 of the Agreements of Association with Development Countries Partners and others Entities

The international partners have supported economic and technically to Peru, but too few directly to activities enclosed within the PAN PERU, to actions related with the combat against desertification, such as the national projects like PRONAMACHCS and FONCODES, that also count with funds of the same Peru.

But there are entities of the international cooperation that have collaborated directly, such as the Embassy of the Netherlands, Fundación Ebert, Fundación Esquel or organisms of the same United Nations (UN), like UNSO-PNUD, FAO or another organisms more, like the BID.

Adopted or Planned Measures in the Context of the PAN-PERU 96

Until today, it has not been realized a rigorous systematization of the experience accumulated by Peru in the combat against the desertification, area in which it has a historic tradition for the exemplar management of the coastal

arid and mountain semiarid (Sierra) ecosystems and a contemporary course date from the 60' years, with the creation of the National Commission of Arid Zones (CONAZA) and of its active participation in the Nairobi meeting on desertification (1977).

Actually, there are contacts with the national projects to be integrated explicitly within the PAN-PERU process, for example, with PRONAMACHCS, FONCODES, NGOs, SENAMHI, CONCYTEC, as well as with inland institutions through regional workshops.

With respect to the implementation of the PAN-PERU, this information is given afterwards, under the subtitle PAN-PERU 96, there is the related with the measures realized in the conservation of natural resources, the institutional organization, the knowledge on desertification, the monitoring and evaluation of this process and the improvement of the economics environment.

With relation to the links with the subregional and regional action programmes, whether there are not too much of them, it has to be emphasized that during the period 1996-2000 it has been realized the V GRULAC in Lima, having Peru an important role.

The local governments have now, within their mandates, to protect the environment; nevertheless, it have not been developed participatory mechanisms of the municipalities in the combat against the desertification.

There are minimum agreements with the established associations (North and Centre); nevertheless, these have not functioned in accordance with the expectations during the period 1996-2000. Likewise, there are directories of institutions and specialists, but they are not operatives, there isn't information flow among them.

Funding Contributions of the National Budgets, as well as the Financing Assistance and the Technical Cooperation

The local actors do not have yet, specifically, measures that guarantee their access to funding sources from the international cooperation. Actually, only INRENA, CONAM and RIOD-Peru are the institutions related with the possible canalization of the international cooperation.

The most frequent participatory way of participation of the international cooperation have been, up to date, through the support to seminaries, forums and regional meetings.

Among the partners of the international cooperation that have supported with force the PAN up to date stand out: UNSO-PUND, The Netherlands, FAO, BID, the UNCCD Secretary, and other ones.

The Peruvian State contributes designating part of its budget to the implementation to the UNCCD through the functioning of INRENA, but it has not dedicated, in a explicit way, more resources for the combat of the desertification within the PAN-PERU 96, except through the great national projects of conservation of natural resources (water, soil, ...) and combat against the poverty.

The funding priorities will be in function of the new guidelines that will be established in the new PAN-2000 Peru.

Reference Points and Indicators utilized to Measure the Progress and their Evaluation

Actually, there are efforts to centralize the information on environment, such as the National Service of Environmental Information (SINIA, by its

abbreviation in Spanish); or on climatic monitoring at national level, such as the National Service of Meteorology and Hydrology (SENAMHI, by its abbreviation in Spanish); or on regional monitoring of "El Niño" event by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONCYTEC, by its abbreviation in Spanish) with the Organization of American States. All of them and another ones of regional character have improved their capacity of gathering of information; nevertheless, the mechanisms to harmonize these systems have NOT been carry out.

ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PAN-PERU 1996-2000

The PAN-PERU 1996 constitutes, for the evaluation of the implementation of the UNCCD, a very special reference, because it contains the practical measures proposed to develop in the years 1996-2000.

Its content is product of a national evaluative process (three regional workshops) and the outputs can be synthesized in the following way: There is a differentiation between the accomplishment of the PAN-PERU 1996 proposals and the actions realized by the institutions of national and regional character. Very important actions have been realized in the combat against desertification, but at the margin of the PAN-PERU 1996. The more important advances have been in the management of natural resources and environment, the combat against extreme poverty, the mitigation systems and early alert of the effects of drought and El Niño event (1997-1998) and the educational area.

In a very low degree, there have been accomplishments related to the monitoring systems (indicators of desertification) and systems of experts, directories, that have not been disseminated nor implemented.

The areas of information, institutional juridical frame, regional associations and the National Fund of Combat Against the Desertification, have not almost been implemented.

With relation to the collection and use of traditional technologies and knowledges, there are great efforts of the ONGs specially, but it have not been worked from the perspective of combat against the desertification; here remains the task of a great systematization of the accomplishments reached in function of the PAN PERU.

The private sector has participated actively through NGOs, communities, work corporations and, in a less degree, the enterprise sector. There are different experiences about the participation of this sector, since actions with too much conservationist tradition, such the *in situ* conservation of agrobiodiversity by the farmers during several centuries, to investments in irrigation projects in arid zones, that have transformed unploughed soils in cultivated fields in the Peruvian Coast. They were present in the PAN 96 and up to date they are part of the North, Centre and South associations of combat against the desertification. Similarly, the NGOs have an important role in the Coast and Sierra of Peru in the combat against the desertification.

There are minimum contacts of the UNCCD-Peru with other conventions (Climate Change) and agreements (Biological Diversity) yet and one of the great tasks is to overcome this situation, as well as the quantification of the losses generated by the desertification processes.

The lack of coordination and leadership to vertebrate the great number of actions that were carry out during the period 1996-2000 were the more important limitations. There is the consensus of the necessity of develop the guidelines referred to the gender (participation of the woman, family and young people), the traditional technologies and knowledges, the systems of early alert and the local governments, all of them in the combat against the desertification.

Similarly, it is necessary to disseminate with more force the concept of desertification with all its implications, so it can be used explicitly by all the institutions of the Peruvian society implied in the combat against the desertification in Peru.

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Saint Kitts and Nevis is a twin island country with a total landmass of just 269 square kilometres, and is part of the Eastern Caribbean chain of islands. The island of Saint Kitts, the larger of the two, is 176 square kilometres in size and is located at latitude 17.3° N, and longitude 62.8° W. Nevis is 93 square kilometres and located at latitude 17° 10' N, longitude 62° 35' W, approximately 3 km south-east of Saint Kitts. This country has a tropical and maritime climate that is heavily influenced by northeast trade winds, an average temperature of some 27 degrees Celsius, and annual average rainfall of 801.4 mm.

The island of Saint Kitts generally rises from the coastline toward its mountain cluster. Three volcanic centres, their associated glacis deposits, and a chain of more maturely reduced residual hills linked by recent beach and saline deposits characterize the topography of the central northwest range.

Nevis lies on the inner volcanic arc of the Lesser Antilles and is comprised of nine distinct volcanic centres strung out southwest to northwest along a parallel of the inner volcanic arc. The central Nevis Peak is the most imposing of these centres rising to 985 metres in altitude, giving the island a conical appearance. Mount Lily (Windy Hill) to the north climbs to 309 metres with Saddle Hill in the south rising to 381 metres. The other subsidiary peak of note is Butlers Mountain (578 metres) which thickens the range in the central east of the island.

The island of Saint Kitts is composed almost exclusively of volcanic rocks of andesite or dacite mineralogy. Its geology is similar to that of other volcanic islands in the Lesser Antillean Archipelago. The islands are the summits of a submerged mountain range which forms the eastern boundary of what is known as the Caribbean Tectonic Plate. Saint Kitts is oriented northwest-southeast, about 80 km long and 16 km wide. The entire island archipelago is geologically young, having begun to form probably less than 50 million years ago, during the Miocene era. Volcanic activity occurred along the ridges of this arc during the Miocene era and has continued since.

Nevis is a volcanic island that began its formation in mid-Pliocene times (approximately 3.45 million years ago). However, the island comprises a number of discrete eruptive centres that range in age from mid-Pliocene to Pleistocene, these prevent any single model of the island's geological evolution. The geology of Nevis can be subdivided into four informal units: Volcanic of the eruptive centres, volcanigenic rocks - pyroclastics and lahars, fluviatile and lacustrine deposits, and raised beaches.

The soils of Saint Kitts have been studied and described in detail by Lang and Carroll (1966) and modified by Granger (1995). Edaphic conditions have been greatly influenced by the island's volcanic origins. Soils of a given type are in most cases a product of the extent to which a given volcanic parent material has weathered. Generally, the soils of Saint Kitts can be placed into groups and types. According to Granger (1995), the soils are generally quite young pedogenically showing very little weathering and profile development. Whereas the most developed soils are found on the steep wet upper slopes, the soils on the gentler, but drier, lower slopes show very little profile development.

In the first soil survey of Nevis conducted by Hardy and Rodrigues, it was noted then that Nevis' soils were generally impoverished with respect to potash and that they differ significantly from those on Saint Kitts (Hardy and Rodrigues, 1947). The soil type in Saint Kitts is predominantly a sandy loam while the Nevis soil is clayey.

The climate of Saint Kitts and Nevis is classified as tropical marine. Generally, steady northeast trade winds and tropical oceanic cyclonic movements influence it. Furthermore, the islands enjoy warm even temperatures with a mean of approximately 27° Celsius. Seasonal and diurnal variations in temperature are small.

Rainfall is mainly orographic and increases in amount and frequency with the altitude. Except for the South East Peninsula (SEP) which is very dry, mean annual rainfall ranges from about 16 cm in the coastal areas, to about 60 cm in the central mountain ranges. The situation at the SEP is quite different, with mean annual precipitation varying from 15.6 cm on the peaks to 13.6 cm at Cockleshell Bay.

While some Caribbean countries such as Dominica have undisturbed and extensive forests, the present vegetation of Saint Kitts and Nevis provides evidence of great disturbance by human activity. In the lowland areas intensive land use has removed all vestiges of the natural vegetation. Although the mountain peaks are still covered by forest, they do not have virgin forest characteristics. Lower slopes are covered by secondary growth on abandoned farms. The vegetation, which comprises about 243 species of trees (Beard, 1946), supports wildlife.

The most significant factor that influences vegetation distribution in Saint Kitts and Nevis and other small islands is the distribution of rainfall. Islands with several peaks cause moisture laden air to rise as it moves in a westerly direction. As a result, when the moisture cools and precipitates rain, most of it occurs consistently on the upper slopes and toward the leeward side of the island. Other factors that contribute to the variations in microclimates and the change in vegetation distribution includes altitude, temperature, humidity, saltiness of the air, the intensity and incidence of sunshine, wind exposure, and soil types. These factors in totality significantly influence the bio-diversity of the island.

Water drains in a radial pattern from the central mountain range in Saint Kitts to the ocean, interrupted only by the minor volcanic cones at Brimstone Hill, Ottley's mountain, Sandy Point Hill and Monkey Hill. Most of the water channels are deep and steep-sided, and are usually dry along all or most of their stretches. Only the relatively large Wingfield and Cayon rivers flow almost to the sea for much of the wettest part of the year.

Water drains in a radial pattern from Nevis Peak to the ocean through ten (10) major drainage basins and is interrupted only by the smaller volcanic cones of Hurricane, Saddle and Round Hills. These basins comprise ephemeral ghauts that may consist of up to three stream orders namely Camps River, Barns Ghaut and Kitt Ghaut. In some basins water is channelled from 457 cm above sea level through relatively straight ghauts with steep but not extended sides. The steep sloping sides of the ghauts favour rapid run-off that causes a quick flow of water to the island's coastal areas. This is coupled with the fact that the rain forest is very small and readily exposes any run-off to open evaporation, thereby reducing the amount of available recharge. In addition, the gently sloping peripheral/coastal section of Nevis is not extensive enough to allow for substantial recharge. Almost all of the ghauts are ephemeral except the Bath Stream, which flows year-round to the sea from springs less than 1.6 km inland. Most of the other ghauts flow intermittently, about 3 to 4 times annually, but more excessively after rainfall.

Most of the country's major watersheds are concentrated in the central area of the islands. The area's forest resources provide a reliable rainwater storage service. Rainwater is intercepted by the forest canopy and then absorbed by the soil and root systems.

The coastal and marine ecosystem in Saint Kitts includes coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangroves, salt ponds, diverse aquatic life, and the coastline. As an island territory, Saint Kitts has a fragile 78.1-km long coastline in need of special protective measures for ecological, environmental and economic reasons. It consists of 34.7 km cliff (rocks), 10.8 km cobble, 6.3 km boulders and rocks, 13.1 km black volcanic sand, and 13.2 km golden sand.

Processes of erosion and accretion are occurring at different points on the coast. This is a result of natural factors such as hurricanes, and manmade causes such as beach sand mining, construction too close to the shore, and pollution. While law strictly prohibits large-scale removal of beach sand, it is still being practised illegally in some places.

Coastal erosion is a serious problem in view of the fact that the beaches represent a very important resource to the island. Not only are they heavily used for local recreation, but they are also a vital part of the tourism product. Additionally, they protect coastal infrastructure during storms and periods of high wave activity.

Coral reefs and sea grass habitats are generally found along the southwest coast between Nag's Head and the southern end of Basseterre Bay, on the northwest coast between Sandy Point and Dieppe Bay, on the east coast between Conaree and North Friar's Bay, and on the southeast coast adjacent to the Narrows. Most coral habitats are relatively small with less species diversity than is typical of similar habitats in the Eastern Caribbean. Deep reefs with species diversity are found off Sandy Point and Guinea Point, and in the Narrows. Sea grass beds, dominated by turtle grass and manatee grass species are mostly common in the SEP of the island.

Mangroves were once abundant. This is no longer the case. The main and most extensive mangrove habitat in Saint Kitts occurs in the SEP. Hawksbill and green sea turtles are found around the entire coast. In addition, a large number of resident and migratory birds depend on the mangrove and pond communities for feeding and nesting. Thus extensive effort is needed to conserve what remains and arrest the decline of these important habitats.

The Saint Kitts Sugar Manufacturing Corporation (SSMC) and the Public Works Department, with very limited resources, have been putting measures in place to arrest the severe land degradation along College ghaut (ravine). SSMC's interest in this activity is influenced by the fact that sugarcane fields in close proximity are progressively undermined by severe erosion. The Public Works Department recognizes that where this ghaut passes suffers severe land degradation in relatively highly populated areas. There is a real threat to human life.

Many other ghauts on the island have severe erosion problems almost with similar intensity to that of College ghaut with the exception, however, that they may not be passing through highly populated areas. Degradation along these ghauts undermines arable farmlands, mainly sugar lands. Also excessive silt from erosion is deposited into the sea, contributing to negative effects on the sea grass beds, coral reefs and other spawning grounds in the marine environs.

Most of the arable lands in Saint Kitts are under sugarcane cultivation. This crop which is a member of the grass family, when managed efficiently, is very useful in preventing the erosion of sandy loam soils, the type that is predominant in Saint Kitts.

Arable lands in the upper land areas of the island where sugarcane cultivation takes place suffer erosion where there is absence of sound contouring principles and terracing.

Unscientific as well as illicit farming occurs in some sections of the forest thus predisposing the land to degradation. Many areas in the forest where there are landslides result from this type of farming.

Mining of sand for building purposes has undermined many beaches. In the process, sand dunes, which are provided by nature for protection of beaches against tidal surges, are destroyed, and this process destroys the natural nesting habitats of turtles.

The island main road in Saint Kitts traverses part of the coastline of Half Way Tree Village. That coastline is being eroded and so too is that part of the main road which traverses it. A bypass road may be necessary to protect road users.

A World Bank project is underway for the Old Road Bay area. It will analyse the condition of the bay area and determine whether the use of organic nets on the slopes will help protect the road. Huge rocks do fall down the shore occasionally and pose severe risks to road users.

Several factors contribute to severe land degradation on the peninsula. Massive deforestation in the past first predisposed the area. The land is volcanic in nature several and slopes have been left unstable after a major road was cut through the hills. The rocks on the slopes pose real danger to road users as they have not been cut back to their natural line.

There is an abundance of monkeys. In addition to being a health hazard, they are pests that destroy farmers' crops. They ravage sugarcane grown for export and destroy vegetation in sensitive areas thus contributing to predisposing areas to land degradation.

Land degradation is prevalent in low lying areas, especially Bath Village and Indian Castle in Nevis which receive the lowest amounts of rainfall and also suffer through extensive livestock grazing by small ruminants and a growing donkey population. As a result, there is a lack of vegetation, which leads to large tracts of sloping land that will be prone to erosion, and abundant levels of sea blast, leaving salt on land.

The stakeholders are the farmers, the Saint Kitts Sugar Manufacturing Corporation, the fisheries department, the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis (GOSKN), land developers, the general public and help is sought from the Legal department.

The NGO community shows concern for environmental issues. It is comprised of the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society, the Saint Kitts Heritage Society, the Leo/Lions Club, the Jaycees, Rotary Club, Scouts, Boys Brigades, Girls Guides, Optimist Club, Anglican Young Peoples Association (AYPA), Pathfinders Association, Business and Professional Women (BPW) and the local media.

Saint Kitts and Nevis are also members of the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA), a regional non-profit organization dedicated to promoting policies and practices which contribute to conservation, protection and wise use of natural resources. The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), formerly the Eastern Caribbean Natural Area Management Programme (ECNAMP), also supports Saint Kitts and Nevis in its goal to strengthen local capacity to manage the living resources critical to development in the Caribbean region.

The National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) analyses the environmental issues affecting Saint Kitts and Nevis in a comprehensive, multisectoral framework and sets forth a long-term strategy for maintaining the country's natural environment, the health and safety of its population, and its cultural heritage as economic development occurs. In proposing practical measures to forestall or remedy environmental problems, the analysis considers cross-sectoral links that affect renewable and non-renewable resources, as well as human activity. The objective is to set forth a long-term national environmental policy and investment strategy based on comprehensive environmental analysis.

Like other small OECS countries, Saint Kitts and Nevis faces substantial environmental challenges with limited managerial and technical resources to meet them. Hence, the national environmental priorities have to be carefully determined and the available resources, including those that can be marshalled through aid, used to maximum advantage.

The Government also intends to build on the existing legal foundation to complete the legal and regulatory framework for environmental management through the promulgation of implementing regulations for existing legislation, the adoption of legislation requiring environmental impact assessments for all major public and private sector investment, and the revision of major laws such as the Public Health Act.

Actions to be taken to develop institutional capacity include (a) strengthening the technical capacity and increasing the financial resources of the National Conservation Commission; (b) developing the environmental role of the Physical Planning Unit; and (c) improving the capacity of all Ministries with environmental responsibilities.

One of the major problems being faced is that there are not sufficient or updated laws or regulations in existence that deal with combating desertification. And for the laws that do apply, there is a lack of enforcement.

The National Conservation and Environmental Protection Act (NCEPA) 1987 provides some protection. It has been discovered that there is a severe shortage of legal draft personnel to prepare to prepare regulations for making the Act more useful. Here the National Conservation Commission, which is provided for under the NCEPA Act, needs to be strengthened.

The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis is not yet in a position to present to the Conference of Parties a fully developed National Action Programme. Our Government will take a planned approach, however. And it will be a fully integrated approach, along the lines set out by the Convention.

SAINT LUCIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Saint Lucia is an independent small island developing State situated in the Eastern Caribbean with an area of 616 sq. km. and a population of 147,180 (1996 Census). Saint Lucia became independent in 1979. It is situated between latitudes, thirteen degrees (13E) and fourteen degrees (14E) north and longitudes, sixty degrees (60E) and sixty-one degrees (61E) west. It is located on the submerged ancient volcanic ridge connecting Martinique in the north to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the south. The island is monolithic, comprising one main island with only a few nearshore satellite islets. The island is mountainous with a very narrow coastal strip. Most of the important towns and villages are located on the coast.

There are two climatic seasons based on rainfall: a wet season that extends from June to November, and a dry season occurring between December and May. In recent times, this distinction in season has not been clear-cut. Average annual rainfall ranges from 1,500mm in the northern and southern extremities to 3,500mm in the wet mountainous regions.

More than 50 per cent of the population lives in the two northern districts of Castries and Gros Islet. With a population density of nearly 700 persons per sq. km. in the north, there is cause for concern. Already problems of land degradation are evident.

Nearly 50 per cent of the population is illiterate (1990 Literacy Survey). Of that percentage, 18.7 per cent was discovered to be functionally literate. The percentage of females receiving an education remains higher up to pre-university and then falls off sharply at the university level.

In 1997, the per capita income stood at US$2626.7. Over the last five years, the economy showed signs of slowing down. This can be contributed to the difficulties that the banana industry is encountering with regards to the adjustments being made in the light of trade liberalization. The decline in the banana industry would have had greater negative impact on the economy were it not for the increase in growth in the tourism sector. The Government of Saint Lucia's (GOSL) policy is to transform Saint Lucia into a service economy. If this is to happen, the natural resources of Saint Lucia, that is a major component of the product to be marketed, must be preserved.

In 1996, the GOSL officially reported that the unemployment rate was shown to be 16.7 per cent. A breakdown of the unemployment statistics was not available, but it can be safe to assume that the majority of the unemployed is young people below the age of 34 years. There are short-term programmes to address this malaise. Notable among them are the Short-Term Employment Programme (STEP) and the Greening Project run by the National Conservation Authority (NCA).

Saint Lucia's major environmental issues include:

- Deforestation;
- Solid and liquid waste management;
- Unplanned development;
- Natural disasters;
- Squatting (for housing and agriculture).

To understand these issues, one must examine the underlying causes. These can be grouped as: Physical, Socio-Economic, Cultural and Educational. For instance, deforestation can be induced by man or can be natural. The mountainous nature of the island and the characteristic of the sub-soil in some regions induce landslides that cause severe damage to the environment.

There is also no legal framework for the management of agricultural lands in Saint Lucia. This is an area of great concern for the protection of the physical and agricultural environments. The situation is complicated by the fact that a significant percentage of the agricultural lands in Saint Lucia is family owned. Saint Lucia still uses the Napoleonic code in which all family members can lay claim to the land. Family lands are, therefore, greatly fragmented. In cases where a single member of the family farms the entire farm, the type of farming does not always reflect what the farmer thinks is best for the management of the farm. In most cases, he or she opts for short-term crops and livestock that may not be appropriate for the area.

However, some Legislative Instruments are currently in place to address the issue of land degradation; some of which need strengthening while others need to be put in place. In 1991, a review of the Environmental Laws of the

Commonwealth Caribbean conducted by the Caribbean Law Institute (CLI) noted that the legislative infrastructure in Saint Lucia for environmental management is, for the most part, outdated and inadequate to cope with current problems, especially those associated with conflicting demands for land use and development. However, the Caribbean Law Institute report did mention that commendable efforts have been made to protect and preserve national biodiversity by acceding to relevant international conventions and implementing their provisions by domestic legislation. What remains is the enforcement of these laws and regulations.

Agriculture and construction (roads and housing development) are the main causes of land degradation in Saint Lucia. Areas that are most affected are those where intensive agriculture is practised. Land degradation occurs in agricultural areas mainly due to indiscriminate deforestation, shifting cultivation and inappropriate soil and water conservation.

On 2 July 1997, Saint Lucia signed the Convention to Combat Desertification. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Lands acting as a legal authority for the Government of Saint Lucia assigned the responsibility for implementing the obligations of the Convention to the Department of Forestry. Although the Focal Point for the Convention was established, there was neither staff nor a budget to perform its obligations under the Convention. In March 2000, a National Coordinating Committee (NCC) was formed and soon after, a national consultation was held to provide guidance to the NCC for the formation of a National Action Plan (NAP).

At the national consultation, participants came up with a road map for the development of the NAP. The following were the areas addressed:

- Methodology and Process for Preparation of the National Action Plan;
- Participation and the Participatory Process;
- Funding Mechanisms and Resource Management;
- Legislative Framework and Mechanisms for Coordination of Implementation of the Convention;
- Strategies towards the development of a National Action Plan.

They also came up with several planned activities for the NAP. These included:

- Integrated Development Planning;
- Draft Land Use Planning Act;
- Environmental Impact Assessment Act;
- Building code and guidelines;
- Development of policy for national land use;
- River bank stabilization project;
- Soufriere area action plan;
- Nature Heritage tourism ' Soufriere Management Plan;
- Saint Lucia Rural Enterprise Project;
- Programme for the Regularization of Unplanned Development;
- Development of management plans for protected areas.

Although the Focal Point was not operational until recently, work in protecting the environment was being conducted by several agencies, albeit, uncoordinated. For Instance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) conducted routine soil and water conservation programmes; the Forestry Department carried out major watershed restoration projects post Tropical Storm Debbie. There are also activities being conducted by other agencies of governmental and non-governmental organizations. Saint Lucia is part of a regional project to put in place a National Environment Strategy. This initiative is coordinated by the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). There is also the Au Picon co-management project that is coordinated by the Caribbean Natural Resource Institute (CANARI). Saint Lucia

has participated in four regional activities related to the Convention. Emanating out of those meetings was the formation of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC). The Group has been instrumental in putting in place a network to exchange information. Saint Lucia has participated in this exchange. As to the other groupings, for instance, DESFLAC, Saint Lucia has not participated. Neither has Saint Lucia made any contributions to the budget of the Regional Coordinating Unit in Mexico.

Finally, the GOSL wishes to place on record the tremendous support given to it by the secretariat of the UNCCD in assisting it to meet its obligations under the Convention. It is in this light that the work of United Nations Consultant, Philbert Brown's work, in assisting in the preparation of the National Consultation, can be viewed as invaluable.

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the purpose of this Convention, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will focus on land degradation as opposed to the extreme case of desertification. Because of its equatoral location and its legal/political history, some indigenous forest cover still remains. How long this forest would be able to supply the needs of Vincentians will depend on the extent to which the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought is implemented. Loss of the forest translates into loss of water, biological diversity and sustainable livelihood. For this reason, much of this first report is centred on deforestation. The report is not exhaustive or conclusive but rather instructive for life in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Both new and existing economic developmental activities have severely impacted forest cover in Saint Vincent in a negative way. Unemployment, poverty and the desire for extravagant life styles have compromise the integrity of the forest and threaten Vincentian existence.

The smaller islands of the Grenadines are less fertile and semi-arid. These islands are therefore prone to desertification. Traditional life-style practices have not been kind to these islands and although they boast of white sand beaches, an asset to the tourism industry, their development remains an uncertainty. Lack of surface water limits development to the extent that life on these islands revolves around the fragile coastal resources.

The experimental approach to environmental resource management sets the National Environmental Advisory Board at the centre of management. The body monitors environmental activities and recommend policy direction and alternative approaches. There are several practical applications to this approach. Most important, it brings a holistic approach to environmental management rather than the piece-wise approach characteristic of sectoral management. This management strategy is supportive of synergies and helps to strengthen overarching themes.

The various forest management and restoration projects shared around the Caribbean is evidence of an awakening of consciousness in the region. The departments of the various government ministries in the Eastern Caribbean charged with the management of the forest are concerned with the loss of biodiversity and the degradation associated with improper use and inappropriate agricultural technologies employed in the watershed. Wanton destruction of forest is manifested in the many sediment plumes extending for miles offshore. The landslides which occur with disastrous effects such as the Gibson Corner (southwestern Saint Vincent) experience speaks of unsound human interactions with the environment.

Public awareness must be encouraged at all levels of the society through consultative dialogue and discussion of the issues. The awareness must stretch beyond knowledge to an active sharing of the regulatory function of management. Any national action plan must strive to address the critical issues of:

(a) Soil conservation;
(b) Improved Agricultural Technology;
(c) Land tenure;
(d) Reafforestation;
(e) Support for NGOs; and
(f) Land Use Planning.

Such an effort would not be devoid of challenges and must therefore be underpinned by a commitment to reduce and mitigate land degradation. The approach does not necessarily ensure sustainability but reflects considerable optimism and the belief that land degradation can be traded for a productive lifestyle.

URUGUAY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oriental Republic of Uruguay is situated in the mild region of the South-eastern part of South America. The borders are: Federative Republic of Brazil at North and East, Argentinian Republic at West, the River Plate at South and the Atlantic Ocean at East.

The territory is politically divided into 19 departments. Spanish is the official language of the country.

The population of the country, according to the last census (1996) is 3,200,000 people distributed as follows: 48 per cent males, 52 per cent females with regional heterogeneity. The increase of the annual rate of the population is 0.64 per cent corresponding to the period 1985-1996.

Important urban centres can be found lengthwise the coast. Among them, Montevideo, in the Northern bank of the River Plate, is the capital of the country.

The coast area houses approximately 70 per cent of the total population.

Uruguay is not free from the emigration process country/city which has been seen in the continent, existing a remarkable macrocephalism in the urban centres which house 90 per cent of the population.

Uruguay has a republican, democratic and presidentialist government. The official education system gives secular, free and obligatory teaching. Besides this there is private teaching at different levels: primary, high school and university.

In spite of the fact that there is freedom of worship, the Catholic religion prevails in the population.

The agricultural sector plays an important role in the national economy and there is an important part of the country involved in its activities establishing a sector of historical and economical significance.

Wheat, rice and barley are the principle cultivations of the country. The management of the land is done by the means of rotation of crops with pastures for bovine cattle and sheep. Uruguayan meat and wool production, recognized all over the world for its excellent level of quality, is performed by natural pastures with slightest supply of rations.

The weather is mild, prevailing the winds from the Northeast with defined periods: winter and summer and intermediate seasons. Rainfall is irregular and changeable during the year. The natural risks are related to climatic events (droughts, floods, freezes).

Uruguay, together with Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, makes up the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). The 48 per cent of exports of the country and 44 per cent of 1996 imports, were made within this common market. The subregional integration goes beyond the financial and commercial aspects because the unification includes education, justice, energy, environment, social security, labor affairs, health and migration too.

Desertification is considered a complicated process in Uruguay, which appears in the whole ecosystem. Due to different natural and/or antrophic causes lose productivity. The final result are decreasing levels in the biological potential of the ecosystem with the resulting deterioration in the life quality of different social groups related to its exploitation.

The land degradation takes place in the more fertile ones where the agricultural activity is concentrated and where erosion can be the first step in a virtually irreversible desertification process.

The principle consequences of these degradation processes are represented by the loss of productivity of the land, impoverishment of medium and small rural producers, rural depopulation and land abandoning. As an example, the areas with bigger problems of erosion show the highest rates or rural emigration (Northeast of Canelones).

The erosion of soils is considered one of the most serious problems related to natural resouces in Uruguay. There is a considerable evidence of this phenomenon, based on the studies of magnitude and location. A 30 per cent of the national territory and more than the 80 per cent of the arable soil, are being affected by different stages of erosion.

The principle causes of soil degradation in the country are related to the land possession problem (temporary possession), dimension of the farms (high number of medium and small producers), bad management of the resource (monoculture, overshepherding, inadequate plowing). The regulation of the Law for the Preservation of Soils and Waters (law 15.239) has been a very important step to control erosion. This law establishes the technical rules for preservation of soils and waters with agricultural purposes and the recovery of eroded soils, entrusting the General Direction of Renewable Natural Resources of the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries, the coordination and direction of activities for the use and preservation of soils.

VENEZUELA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The national report has been structured in two main parts: the first one with the introduction and the methodology. The presentation of the country, the points of view about the erosion problem and The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and methodology aspects are included in this part. The second part is conformed by seven central chapters, where the results of national consulting processes are expressed, according to previous and future experiences and commitments that in fact aboard the application of the Convention in Venezuela.

Introduction

Divided into six sections presenting some ideas, one of the initial ones is the evolution of life in the planet from water to earth; the attitudes of the

world population toward the environmental problems being one of them the erosion of the soil as an initial degradation process of the land, where is relevant the identification of the actions and conditions that produced them.

The historic evolution of the territorial area, from pre-Columbian time till today. The agriculture production of the national history, the beginning of the commercial boom of the oil industry in 1922, the military and political facts that affect the social, economical and environmental conditions.

The natural-physical dimensions, where each Natural Region is described and classify according to its natural restrictions, potentialities and some human, social and economical conditions.

The reports objectives are: to present the situation of the deserted areas in the country, the convention goals, the past actions in fighting the erosion and degradation of the soil problem and the future action to apply.

Venezuela enters the Convention in 1998 after studying and getting involved with the instrument, particularly understanding the desertic fication problem since 1995. Been this a development problem that requires inter-institutional and multidiciplines efforts, the defense of the vulnerable ecosystems and the community participation.

Venezuela's vision upon the Convention goals. Its purposes is to expand the zone where it reaches (arid, semi-arid, sub humid-dry) toward more hummed zones or areas that are also in degradation of the soil and poverty of the population.

The natural disaster of December 1999 in almost the totality of the north-central area of the country showed that an atypical climatic variation can cause a big natural and social disaster when the occupational rules of the territory are violated, specially when the prevention and conservation of the hydrographic basing are not respected.

Methodology

The basis of the preparation of this report are the participation and national consult of distinguish actors involved in the matter. The eight faces can be summarized as following:

- A workshop ministerial and interministerial to designed the questionnaire that would collect the information needed to elaborate the report with the assessment of the international assessor of the Convention;
- 120 questionnaires were delivered to private enterprises, governmental and non-governmental organizations, environmentalist and technical cooperation agencies;
- Analysis and synthesis of 50 answers received;
- The designed of the seven sketches for the questionnaires;
- National workshop for the designed and assessment of the main chapters;
- The final designed of the chapters of this national report;
- Mailing the total report to the Secretary of the German Convention through the Chancellery;

Chapter I: Development of variables and bases (diagnostic)

Evaluation and diagnostic of previous experiences, in the national, regional and local areas. First of all 20 twenty works were identified in the environmental area of the natural resources in degradation of soil and grounds in the territory.

First of all is very relevant the support of the Ministry of Environment and National Resources in two big main programmes and projects: The National Inventory of Soils and Grounds and The Environmental Venezuelans System. It is also good to mention the support of other national institutions such as Agriculture National Research Center (FONAIAP), The Venezuelan Guyana Corporation (CVG), The Venezuelan Foundation Of Seismological Research Center (FUNVISIS), and some specific publications in this area build the National Cardinal References.

In local and regional levels, two great sources have contributed to the general environmental knowledge and degradation of the soils, one is the universities, such as Yacambu Lisandro Alvarado University, Francisco de Miranda University, Táchira University, Venezuela Central University, the Inter American Center of Development and Environmental and Territorial Research. (CIDIAT). And the public institutions MARN; FONAIAP; PIDZAR Project; IPIAT; and Palmichal enterprise.

Chapter II: Evaluation processes

Evaluation processes involved the supervision of the field actions and the management to guide the programmes and projects.

Institutional development for the elaboration of the indicators. A list is made with the most common indicators of environmental and agricultural use in order to know the facts of the environmental states and the institutional performance. It is important to mention that the Venezuelan Environmental Balance 1994-1996 named Health was consulted.

Methods to integrate the actual mechanisms and systems. It is formed by two programmes of the ministry: Management and Conservation of Basing; through the control and checking system plans.

Mechanisms of early alert for possible dryness. The VENEHMET Project should be constituted in the near future, over the angular stone itself; due that Venezuela is a country historically affected for long periods of dryness, that affect the standards of life, public services and agricultural production in general.

Environmental economy. This discipline has not been approached by the MARN, but not so in the universities and The Polar Foundation.

Chapter III: National plans and strategies for the convention support

Venezuela has not formulated a clear and explicit policy on desertification neither on the state environmental policy nor its direct instruments.

Legal juridical instrument system needs to be modified and actualized according to the new constitution of 1999. The Environmental Organic Code is under discussion on this moment and it will allow the ruling of the legal instruments.

National plans, strategies and other supporting instruments to the Convention. The most important are: The national Constitution; The National Plan of reargonitation of the territory; The National Report to Rio (1992).

Institutional aspects: It is important the need of the reorganization of MARN. As a main instrument of the environmental control, as well as the modification of its organic and internal rulings.

National plans: there is not a new national plan; the previous plans are the bases of the big national and regional projects among them the project of the fluvial basing Apure Orinoco which is fundamental in the decentralization strategies.

Problem of relevant impacts related to the degradation of the soils and desertification. A serious of anthropic actions in the agricultural areas that are degrading the land in the country are named; problems of natural order such as dryness and flows; as well as social-environmental impacts due to urban and rural marginality over the geographic spaces.

Institutional answers: two main lines are important here, The first one are the action of the executed plans of the regional dependencies of the MARN, research centres, private industries and ONG, as well as the formulations of the conservation of the resources and rural development plans in different areas on the country. The second one is the proposal of the integral general development plan which is formed by: National Soil Plant, National and Regional Plan of the management of the hydrografic basing, Agricultural and nourishment National Development Plan, and the national inventory of affective areas by problems of dryness, desertification, degradation of soils are all priority.

Chapter IV: Measurements for the promotion of the environmental conservation, the institutional growth and organization of the knowledge over desertification.

Actual programmes and projects. Even there is not a national policy for the problems of the degradation of the lands in Venezuela, some specifics programmes and projects are being developed, some examples of these are Plans and programmes of conservation, management of hydrographic basing project of soil evaluation and planification of its use, conservation and use of the hydra resources of the international basing Carrapia-Paraguachon research programme and projects and the development of arid zones among others.

New actions and prevention. This are the ones we need to enhance the fight against the desertification of a country. Among the most important we can find: the elaboration of the national programme, training of the special technicians, coordinated programmes according to the Desertification Convention, biodiversity, climate change, reactivation of the conservation programme of the soils, actualization the degradation state of the Venezuelan soils.

The environmental education. Through the last 30 years the national programme called Foundation Gran Mariscal De Ayacucho, plus the help received from CIDIAT have prepared technical and scientific professionals which reinforced the institutional capacity needed for the environmental conservation and the increased knowledge over desertification the continuity of this actions are needed to improve the decentralization of the public administration and the MARN.

Reinforcement of the institutional and local capacities. In this areas we have the knowledge and the experience needed to identify possible solutions to the environmental and socioeconomical problems. The tradition of decentralization in this country is really short. and the results are far from being beneficial in particular with regard to the processes and legal support. Being this the main reason for the need of the reorganization, The MARN have had the tendency of reinforcing the regional performance.

Chapter V: Institutional Measures

The Main national point and the national coordination instrument. The first one is represented by the ministry of International Relationship, through its department of environment, and the next one by the General Direction of Hydrographic Basing in Coordination with the international cooperation department. both from the ministry of environment and national resources. which is the one in charge of the things related to the environment in general. Coordinator of the action, public consulting, and participate and integrate the different facts; public, private, Scientific and the organized society.

Coherent and functional institutional frames to control desertic fication. The priority assigned by MARN and CLD goes through two actions: Improve the coordination mechanisms through the formation of an inter-institutional committee and the internal group MARN. On the other hand by the development of the PAN through which the technical professionals with experience could guarantee the exchange of relevant information and look for political and financial support from the national government and the international agencies of cooperation.

Regulating and legal frame. The MARN is now going through a process of revision of the fundamental environmental dispositions in concordance with the new national constitution approved in 1999.

Chapter VI: Participative Process

Participatives methods. The participation of all the citizens is fundamental in the fight against the desertification. The women should play a protagonic roll guaranteed by the new constitution. The Environmental Educational Programme formal and informal, the consciousness campaign The Environmental Educational research projects integrated all the methods.

Identification of national priorities by the representatives of different sectors. The identified sectors where group of volunteers, public and private enterprises, students, housewives and consultants among others.

Information and communication nature. There is a different variety of media that allows to spread the information about desertification: meetings, workshops, conferences, oral expositions, congresses, agricultural and environmental extension expressions.

Local and regional population interest. Evaluation of the consults results. The needs of the population of the arid, semi-arid and subsumed areas are the following: domestic uses, for watering field managing the hydra resources a development plan to fight poverty and creating new sources of employee development alternative systems, to make the soils productive basic services, to control the natural tendency of the soil.

Chapter VII: Financial contributions of the national budget and international support

For action in order to fight against desertification there are not financial contributions so far. There are two basic sources of financial help, the ones going to research institutions coming from (CONICIT) and (FUNDACITES). The other source is the centralized national public administration and the decentralized ones.

Processes for the movilitations of the internal resources: Through the elaboration, studies, projects, executions of buildings equipment supply, etc.. But, the strategies for giving financial support have not being developed so far creating the inefficient use of the economical resources, wasting of time and human effort.

Identification of financial requirement available resources and establishing priorities. The needs identified were quantification of the desertic fication problems education and consciousness, institutional reinforcement.

International support. There is a very little experience on this matter in this country. We are just submitted to be send to assessor meetings an evaluation of their results. There is no clear policy that let us identified the financial and administrative mechanisms as well as how to access to that cooperation.

- - - - -

UNITED NATIONS

Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.2 (D)
16 October 2000

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Fourth session
Bonn, 11-22 December 2000
Item 7 (a) and (b) of the provisional agenda[1]

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

(a) REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES OF REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

(b) REVIEW OF THE REPORT ON PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA

Addendum

PART ONE: SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES

PART TWO: PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Note by the secretariat

CONTENTS

PART ONE: SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 6	3
II.	NATIONAL REPORTS RECEIVED	7	3
III.	SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS	8 - 75	3

GE.00-

[1] ICCD/COP(4)/1.

GE.00-63850

		Paragraphs	Page
A.	Strategies and priorities within the framework of sustainable development plans or policies .	10 - 17	5
B.	Institutional measures taken to implement the Convention	18 - 30	6
C.	Participatory processes in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programmes	31 - 40	7
D.	Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programmes and partnership agreements with developed country Parties and other interested entities	41 - 47	8
E.	Measures taken or planned within the framework of the National Action Programme, including measures to improve the economic environment, to conserve natural resources, to improve institutional organizations, to improve knowledge of desertification and to monitor and assess the effects of drought.	48 - 60	9
F.	Financial allocations from national budgets in support of implementation as well as financial assistance and technical cooperation received and needed, identifying and prioritizing requirements	61 - 68	11
G.	Review of the benchmarks and indicators utilized to measure progress, and an assessment thereof	69 - 75	12
IV.	LESSONS LEARNED	76 - 100	13
A.	Lessons from the NAP formulation process . . .	76 - 98	13
B.	Lessons from the national reporting system . .	99 - 100	16
V.	RECOMMENDATIONS	101	16

Annexes

I.	Country Parties that submitted their national reports	17
II.	Status of national forums/workshops	18

PART TWO: PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

I.	INTRODUCTION	102 - 105	19
II.	BACKGROUND	106 - 113	19
III.	SUMMARY OF REPORTS ON THE PROGRESS OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME	114 - 123	21
IV.	PROGRESS OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES	124 - 148	22
V.	THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME	149 - 190	26
VI.	RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC LINES	191 - 205	34

PART ONE: SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS FROM AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with article 26 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)[2] each Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) country Party is required to communicate through national reports to the UNCCD secretariat, measures undertaken to implement the Convention. These reports will be considered at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties of UNCCD, to be held from 11 to 22 December 2000.

2. By decision 5/COP.2, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat to prepare a synthesis report (decision 11/COP.1, para. 17) based on the information contained in the national reports.

3. The format and content of the national reports are specified in decision 11/COP.1, para. 10. The UNCCD secretariat prepared, in collaboration with several United Nations agencies and African subregional organizations, a Help Guide, which was designed to provide a common format, practical recommendations and support for the preparation of national reports (see ICCD/COP(3)/INF.3).

4. At the Fifth UNCCD Regional Meeting for LAC held at Lima, Peru in August 1999, and at the Grupo Latino-Americano y del Caribe (GRULAC) meeting held at Recife, Brazil, in November 1999, the Parties from the region revised the Help Guide and agreed to follow the resulting version in the preparation of their national reports.

5. In the process of preparing the synthesis report the secretariat developed a comprehensive database. This database is a product of the LAC national reports. Each country has verified the information codified, which will be used in the process for years to come. The main problems, needs and requirements of each country of the region as regards UNCCD implementation can be found in this database.

6. The UNCCD secretariat supported the LAC country Parties in the preparation of their national reports by providing technical and financial assistance when requested. Their assistance and that from other sources is acknowledged in the reports submitted.

II. NATIONAL REPORTS RECEIVED

7. At the Fifth Regional Meeting of the LAC held at Lima, Peru, it was decided that 25 April 2000 would be the deadline for the submission of national reports. By that date, 13 reports, or 43 per cent of the total, had been received; the last submission was made on 19 May (see annex I). Of the reports submitted, 60 per cent were in Spanish, 37 per cent in English and 3 per cent in French. The report is a synthesis based on those national reports. The format and the content of the reports were standardized in accordance with decision 11/COP.1 and the Help Guide.

III. SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS

8. Different approaches were used in the preparation of the national reports. While some countries saw this as an opportunity to make a critical analysis and auto-evaluation of the implementation process at the national level, others used it as a platform to launch the preparation process of the National Action

---

[2] Decisions 10/COP.1; 11/COP.1; 5/COP.2; 5/COP.3.

Programme (NAP). Irrespective of the approach, the reports present a vivid picture of the UNCCD implementation process in the LAC region. Summaries of the national reports are contained in ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.2 (A), (B), and (C).

9. One of the conclusions that can be drawn from these reports is that there is a general misconception that the LAC region is only a green region. It is clear from the reports that desertification, as defined in article 1 (a) and (f) of the Convention, is not alien to the region. Land degradation involving, *inter alia*, the processes of soil erosion, salinization and the loss of the productivity of the land is expanding resulting in an increasing number of hectares of impoverished denuded lands, and will finally lead to desert conditions. As the hidden radiography shows, this process has no respect for geographical frontiers. Consequently, a continental vision emerges with the Parties in the region recognizing the Convention as a necessary instrument in the fight against this phenomenon. In this regard the reports show the following:

(a) The majority of the Latin American and the Caribbean country Parties are very much engaged in the process of preparing their NAPs for implementation and are exploring ways of integrating them with other environmental programmes. For some countries of the region, land degradation and desertification processes are not a priority agenda item because there are other more urgent priorities to resolve. But even if there is political willingness to implement the Convention and to create institutions and invest human, technical and financial resources, it is realized that these are insufficient measures as the land degradation situation is grave;

(b) Implementation of the Convention in the LAC region is basically a new process. By 1997, 53 per cent of the countries of the region had ratified or acceded to this international instrument. Prior to this, the figure was only 16 per cent (see annex I). There is however a high level of regional commitment to the process as can be seen from the data in annex I. Their commitment to the national reporting process is further evidence of this (see annex II);

(c) The huge effort made after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED or the Rio Earth Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro on from 3 to 14 June 1992, has helped in the creation of environmental institutions, policies, laws, programmes and projects; it has also helped to give momentum to the institutionalization of the UNCCD process, in the region as well as to the formulation and implementation of the NAPs. Environmental plans have permeated into many sectors including agriculture, water management, energy, science and technology, education and fisheries. It is significant to note however that this new approach is only reflected in the trade relations of a few countries (23 per cent). This fact is indicative of a dilemma in the national development strategies of the LAC countries. Export growth based on agricultural products is considered essential in the economic growth strategies. Even if there is currently an important environmental dimension in the agricultural sector, trade relations demand a certain level of productivity and competitive quality to accomplish the growth goals. Land degradation can result from the repeated intensive cultivation of one crop, which depletes nutrients as well as intensifying the use of the land beyond its productive capacity. The fact that the economic development of several of these countries depends on the production of agricultural products enforces this so-called growth trap, which is exacerbated by the current realities of economic globalization;

(d) The Latin American and the Caribbean country Parties recognize the need for creating synergy between international environmental agreements and programmes or related conventions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UNCCD, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests or Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF). Consequently, all these countries are developing national action programmes simultaneously through different projects.

Nevertheless, even where there exists potential for synergy and/or complementary action among these projects, in general, this is still at an exploration phase. Concepts such as the ecosystem approach, equitable benefit-sharing arising from the use of natural resources and traditional knowledge of local communities and indigenous peoples that have already been developed in other international environment conventions need to be incorporated into the fight against land degradation.

A. Strategies and priorities within the framework of sustainable development plans or policies

10. Parties were requested through the Help Guide to provide information on national plans and strategies available in other social and economic areas that have relevance to combating land degradation and desertification. National development plans, national environmental strategies in the field of combating land degradation developed prior to the UNCCD, including national and local strategies from Agenda 21, national conservation strategies and plans in other areas were also considered.

11. Before the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the agricultural and forestry sectors were the areas in which the Parties in the region tried to implement policies, plans and strategies concerning land degradation. The policies were usually aimed at soil-and-water conservation and/or rehabilitation. There were however countries that began observing the principles and guidelines of UNCCD in dealing with their arid and semi-arid ecosystems even before becoming a party to the Convention.

12. All reports show that the Parties have formulated and/or adopted environmental policies, laws, plans, strategies and/or action plans addressing, directly or indirectly, land degradation and drought. UNCED provided in large part the impetus for these activities and created the momentum for the treatment of environmental issues by countries.

13. The National Development Plans (NDP) of the Parties include the sustainable development concept as a central element. The new versions of these plans contain in many cases UNCCD principles and guidelines.

14. The concept of sustainable development (economic growth, social equity and environment conservation) through the implementation of conventions related to the ecosystem and Agenda 21 has permeated the national ministries and departments involved directly with the environment and sustainable development planning. However, land degradation considerations in other socio-economic areas are rather low, as is clear from the reports. There is a real need, however, for the integration of these policies in the mining, health, tourism and trade sectors, and to a lesser extent the housing sector. There is also a need to show how sustainable development relates to migration. It must be said that this concept has already been included in the strategies of some countries and in NAPs for several sectors such as mining (23 per cent), trade (20 per cent), tourism (33 per cent), migration (10 per cent) and housing (37 per cent).

15. Thirty per cent of the countries have specific and focused action based on UNCCD principles and guidelines designed to address, through general sectors such as health and education, the problems of arid, semi-arid and sub-humid zones. Others intend to do this through the preparation and development of NAPs.

16. The ecosystem-related conventions and programmes (Climate Change, Bio-diversity and Desertification conventions, and the Intergovernmental Panel/Forum on Forests) are being implemented in all country Parties through different policies, strategies and plans. Synergies among these conventions through policies, mechanisms or financial linkages in specific projects are

still incipient and are not targeted as strategic goals. Some countries are currently developing specific projects in a passive synergetic way as a response to their existing or particular conditions and circumstances.

17. Some countries consider the creation of an international cooperation strategy focused on the UNCCD implementation and the possibility of creating synergies with the other sustainable development conventions as one way of dealing with the current financial difficulties.

B. Institutional measures taken to implement the Convention

18. In accordance with the Help Guide the national reports were expected to provide information on the National Coordinating Body (NCB) of the Parties, covering, *inter alia*, its legal status, its composition, mode of operation and information base.

19. All countries have initiated general environmental policy measures as an expression of their willingness to incorporate the environmental dimension in the development strategy. Ratification of the UNCCD by more than 90 per cent of the countries of the region, as well as the measures taken to create new institutions to deal with environmental problems, is further evidence of this willingness. The lack of capacity to carry out their commitment is however a serious limitation and 53 per cent of the countries have indicated the urgent need for more capacity-building measures to respond to these new requirements.

20. Ninety-three per cent of the Parties have created formal or informal NCBs with the objective of implementing the Convention. In many of them the NCB is under the umbrella of the Ministry of the Environment, generally based at and operating out of their soil, forest, watershed or ecosystems departments or units. The National Focal Point is in most cases the coordinator of this body. In some countries the NCB acts as an advisory body, in others as an executive body.

21. The NCBs of most of the countries (75 per cent) do not have independent legal status, and 92 per cent have no financial autonomy. These are financed out of the budget of the ministry or departments of which they are a part. Due to the lack of resources the officers of the NCBs usually have multiple functions that are often not related to land-degradation activities. Only two countries have allocated financial resources to support the NCB; others have planned to do this in 2001. Twenty-nine per cent of the countries are in the process of defining the legal status of their NCBs.

22. The NCBs are basically bodies comprising representatives of different government ministries, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the private sector. The NCBs while being multidisciplinary show a tendency of being government-dominated in terms of representation, and although most of them allow for equal representation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) the same cannot be said for community-based organizations or indigenous peoples. Some countries have developed the idea of open civil society participation (NGOs, local communities, indigenous peoples, church, private sector) by the creation of local branches of the NCBs at the municipal level, as part of their decentralization strategy.

23. Twenty-five per cent of the country Parties have started land-tenure reform measures as a concrete strategy to stimulate the participation of local communities and indigenous peoples in finding solutions to the problems of land degradation. There are a number of factors that hinder the development of appropriate institutional measures; these include the absence of proper land policies as well as current land tenure and use patterns that force local people to exacerbate land-degradation processes. However, decentralization processes are taking place in 37 per cent of the countries. There is also a trend of

giving local populations the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process (33 per cent of the countries).

24. In some countries, apart from the environmental, agricultural and educational sectors, other vital sectors such as finance and economic development are included in the NCBs. Some Parties stressed the need to sensitize the various sectors of government and society in general to the land-degradation problem.

25. A few countries highlighted specific efforts to ensure equal gender representation in the NCBs, while others indicated that the gender perspective would be included in the preparation and implementation of the NAPs.

26. The electronic information systems are at different levels of development. The NCBs in some countries have computers and e-mail capacity (53 per cent), information systems (17 per cent), a database (33 per cent) and Web sites (33 per cent) that directly address land-degradation issues. In other countries the land-degradation information systems are just a part of the general environmental information network.

27. The formulation of the NAP is a process with variable methodological approaches and different timing schedules. Seventeen per cent of the countries have officially adopted their NAPs, 13 per cent are in the process of adopting them and 70 per cent are currently in the preparation stage. In 37 per cent of the countries this formulation process includes analysis of possible synergies between land-degradation processes and other environmental issues.

28. Of those countries that have officially adopted their NAPs, 60 per cent have considered financing them as part of their national development plans and/or their national environmental plans. However even when the NAPs are strategically integrated into the national development plans and/or environmental plans, the necessary allocation of financial resources is not made.

29. The connection of the NAPs with the subregional and regional action programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean has had an unusual development. The fact that the latter two programmes were developed before some countries created their NAPs means that those countries are participating in the programmes and the programmes in turn are influencing the development of their NAPs. This is further proof of a real willingness by some NCBs to implement the Convention even if there is not always a corresponding commitment at the national level in some areas.

30. Although there are political and institutional complexities there is a real need to ensure that policies and institutions have the required effect as regards the implementation of the UNCCD.

C. Participatory processes in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programmes

31. The UNCCD bottom-up approach is a distinct and crucial principle that should characterize the implementation of the Convention. Most of the countries that are at an advanced stage in the formulation of their NAPs have applied this principle. In the national identification process of establishing priorities for NAPs, these countries have tried to use an all-inclusive approach to allow for the participation of different stakeholders. Several countries have significant experiences in the area of local population participation under the umbrella of general environmental national action plans, which cover the issue of land degradation as well.

32. Private sector participation in the UNCCD NAP formulation process is generally low (23 per cent) in the region.

33. From the reports received it is noticeable that there is a general tendency of greater involvement of women's organizations as well as of students and youths. It can therefore be presumed that while only 16 per cent of the countries reporting mentioned this explicitly, such participation will increase significantly in the near future.

34. It is the view of some countries that stakeholder participation (public, private, national, regional or local) is a crucial point that needs to be resolved in the participation process of UNCCD. Public awareness through communication has a high priority in most of the countries and is used as an instrument to activate different stakeholder participation. Nine countries have developed specific communication strategies. Campaigns, seminars, national workshops, bulletins, videos, triptychs, informative letters etc. are some of the tools used in most of the countries to sensitize the public. Nevertheless, the need for more in-house awareness-raising for different stakeholders was underlined. It is clear however, that the present situation reflects the fact that UNCCD implementation is still in its infancy in the region and there is no doubt that this will improve over time.

35. Direct participation in the process of identification of priorities for the NAPs varied from country to country: while it is up to 2,000 representatives in some cases, it is as low as 60 persons in others.

36. Only a few countries (17 per cent) mentioned the involvement of local actors in the monitoring and evaluation processes.

37. Radio, television and the print media are used by several countries to spread information on land degradation. Some countries have emphasized the need to develop the awareness process at the regional and local level. The multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural characteristics of several Parties in the region were identified as additional difficulties in the design of an effective communication strategy that really reaches local populations.

38. Some countries highlighted the need for more information on land degradation for institutions and educational programmes. Most of the local and regional authorities lack information on CCD.

39. Some countries are of the view that Desertification Day (17 June) is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of land degradation among the public. They feel there is a need to further promote this day, and that this could be done by organizing a regionally coordinated campaign project about the day using artistic and media tools.

40. There are NGO networks organizing communication strategies in some countries. Electronic bulletins and Internet web sites dedicated to land degradation are some of the new tools being used in the region.

D. Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programmes and partnership agreements with developed country Parties and other interested entities

41. In some countries 33 per cent of the region where NAPs have been adopted and are now being implemented (NAP-advanced countries), international cooperation has been a key factor in the process of combating desertification. These partners through multilateral and bilateral assistance have participated in the different phases of the formulation of NAPs and have supported very actively technical capacity-building. It is important to note however that the interests and priorities of partners and those of affected countries are not always identical, and do differ significantly at times. There is therefore a need to reconcile these diverse priorities and interests for the further realization of the implementation process.

42. Aside from the NAP-advanced countries, the countries are in general agreement on the lack of participation of international partners as regards capacity-building, transfer of knowledge and expertise. And while some of them have received financial support from some partners it has been basically in the form of small grants. This financial support to NAPs formulation and implementation varies from US$10,000 (low advanced implementation countries) to US$1,000,000 (advanced implementation countries). Other countries have pointed out that even when they have sent their NAPs and/or other proposals and projects related to land degradation to international partners they did not receive a positive response. These facts indicate that the land degradation issue is not a priority in the financial strategies of some developed partners.

43. The international financial institutions, particularly the regional banks, have been active in advanced NAP countries. In other countries regional banks have contributed to some projects that cover issues of land degradation.

44. Those Parties that are at the initial stages of their NAP formulation process have different approaches as regards international cooperation. Some countries have tried to involve the cooperation agencies right at the start of national consultations on the preparation of their NAPs. Others consider it more opportune to formulate a strategy for international cooperation to be executed by their international cooperation office.

45. The ongoing Platform for Cooperation between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean adopted at Recife, Brazil, in October, 1998, is considered by some countries as very important for horizontal interregional cooperation.

46. The subregional horizontal cooperation through projects such as Gran Chaco, Puna Americana, and the Eastern Caribbean Project are considered by the countries concerned as an important part of the implementation process as they allow for the development and implementation of action plans that cut across many borders and frontiers. They also allow for political, social and cultural cooperation in the framework of a comprehensive approach and permit enhanced training, capacity-building and the transfer of knowledge.

47. Several countries have identified the Global Environmental Facility and the Global Mechanism as potential financial partners for the development of activities related to the preparation and implementation of NAPs, as well as regional activities. Some reports indicate that given the diversity of executing agents for international environmental activities, there is a need for effective coordination and monitoring.

E. Measures taken or planned within the framework of the National Action Programme, including measures to improve the economic environment, to conserve natural resources, to improve institutional organizations, to improve knowledge of desertification and to monitor and assess the effects of drought

48. Article 4 of annex III of the UNCCD Convention entitled "Regional Implementation Annex for Latin America and the Caribbean" is the consensual framework on priorities for implementation of action plans and measures. The development of technical programmes and projects under the NAPs varies significantly. Nevertheless, there is a general trend among countries independent of the maturity of the NAPs to concentrate their efforts, or of planning to do so, on three priority areas established by the Regional Implementation Annex. These priorities are improvement of the economic environment in degraded areas; soil conservation and the efficient use of water; and formulation of emergency plans to mitigate the effects of drought.

49. Among some of the NAP-advanced countries a special feature is the remarkable wide multi-stakeholder participation in the NAPs, which has created

an environment that allows the local population and institutions of different regions to formulate several hundred small projects to be executed through bilateral cooperation.

50. Based on the information gathered from the reports there is an urgent need, particularly at the local level, for specific programmes addressing capacity-building and the training of human resources in the area of combating desertification and drought.

51. A persistent idea that emerges from several reports is the necessity to strengthen cooperation between NAPs designed for CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD implementation. There are no specific or concrete suggestions as to how this may be done.

52. In the LAC region there are clear links between the subregional and the Regional Action Programmes and the countries National Action Programmes. The Gran Chaco and Puna Americana, the Eastern Caribbean Project on Bio-diversity and Land Degradation and the Hispaniola Ecosystem projects are vigorous initiatives that are valued by the countries concerned. The potential of these subregional projects to act as catalysts for the NAPs of the individual countries is an indication of the possibilities for horizontal cooperation within the region.

53. Concerning the region, countries have taken legislative measures aimed at strengthening the relevant institutions, integrating policy to prevent land degradation in agricultural and forestry plans, improving land ecology and economic zoning, and increasing public awareness measures.

54. There is also a trend in the region to try to revive the traditional knowledge and the technologies associated with the management of ecosystems and to improve existing indicators of land degradation.

55. Countries with more advanced NAP processes have developed subprogrammes or strategies for the implementation of measures to improve the socio-economic development. The development of watershed, coastal and soil conservation programmes in arid and semi-arid zones, has been the approach of some countries with regard to socio-economic improvement. Other countries listed specific tasks being developed under this priority issue, but without going into detail. Other countries highlighted, *inter alia*, the different programmes and measures taken under the umbrella of combating poverty to address unemployment, development of the productivity of women and regional funds for rural development, for indigenous peoples and for community development, as the concrete measures being adopted in their NAPs.

56. Multiple projects under the umbrella of different institutions are being developed as part of the NAPs to improve the economic environment, the conservation of natural resources and institutional organization, and to enhance knowledge on desertification and drought in the region. But according to some countries, these projects require integrated approaches as well as medium- and long-term strategies at the local level.

57. Several countries are developing forestry research projects in arid and semi-arid zones linked to forestry productivity with species for multiple uses. Some countries are promoting commercial forest plantations to improve the socio-economic conditions of the rural populations. In this framework a campaign is being developed called "Campaign for the National Ecological Restoration against Land Use Change caused by Forests Fires". Another interesting programme called "Program for the Defence of the Forest Frontier and Soil Conservation" is to establish mechanisms to promote good practices on land use in the agricultural and forestry systems prone to land degradation. These are some of the concrete measures taken by the countries.

58. Research is being carried out on the development of sustainable agriculture and rehabilitation of degraded soils. Production diversification in fragile ecosystems is being explored by some countries with the objective of continuing production while conserving the fauna and flora of these ecosystems.

59. The establishment of national NGO networks to combat land degradation in coordination with the national focal points and NCBs is a trend in the region.

60. The creation of a database and the development of comprehensive Geographical Information System (GIS) for land degradation are priority activities being implemented or planned as a way of strengthening the knowledge base for the development of monitoring systems.

F. Financial allocations from national budgets in support of implementation as well as financial assistance and technical cooperation received and needed, identifying and prioritizing requirements

61. Only 16 per cent of the countries in the region have specific government mechanisms to guarantee the financing of activities to combat land degradation. These allocations vary from country to country.

62. Projects linked to the combat of land degradation are financed from the regular budget allocated for environmental management. However, there are no specific data as to what percentage of national budgets is dedicated for general environment management.

63. Some countries have indicated that given their current economic situation, with little or no economic growth over recent decades, coupled with excessive internal and international debt, money for investment in the environment is scarce. They are hard pressed to find financial resources to be put towards a dedicated fund to deal with issues of land degradation as a top priority. When it is considered that in the year 1999/2000 up to 60 per cent of the annual budget of some countries went to debt servicing, it is easy to understand their sense of priorities. These countries need the assistance of the donor community and the Global Mechanism if they are to develop and implement their National Action Programmes.

64. The channelling of funds to those in need of them and the access of the latter to those funds are issued raised in the reports. The fact remains that local actors have little or no say in these two fundamental issues.

65. Private sector participation in support of community-based projects in affected areas is very low in the region.

66. Fifty per cent of the country Parties have not developed innovative financial schemes for application in land-degradation projects although several countries do have national environmental funds. Some countries have established other specific mechanisms such as a Green Protocol, National Peasant Fund, Land Bank proposal, National Fund for Land Restoration and Conservation, and the creation of an environmental tax for industry. The question is how much of the funds collected from these facilities is actually used for environmental purposes.

67. Some countries pointed out the need to create a financial strategy that would give the necessary impetus to the NAP formulation and implementation processes. The identification of funds calls for collaboration between pertinent institutions to increase the funding capacity. There is also a need to develop strategic partnerships, identify the common objectives of partners, create and implement projects that encourage collaboration between different sectors, create formal instruments of cooperation between agencies and ensure equitable benefits for all concerned.

68. There is a remarkable difference between countries as regards financial assistance and technical cooperation received. International cooperation has been a key aspect in the development of National Action Plans in those countries where such plans are already being implemented; technical and financial support has permitted the development and consolidation of their NAP process. But 77 per cent of the country Parties have affirmed that effective support from international partners for cooperation with UNCCD implementation as regards technical support and capacity-building has been low. Eighty per cent of the country Parties are of the view that support for training and the transfer of knowledge from international partners in terms of UNCCD implementation is very insignificant.

G. Review of the benchmarks and indicators utilized to measure progress, and an assessment thereof

69. In spite of the many existent environmental diagnostics, 33 per cent of the countries in the region have no specific diagnostic on land degradation. If there are such diagnostics they are not systematized but exist in a dispersed way. This situation was highlighted particularly by those countries that are initiating the implementation of their NAPs.

70. Seventy-three per cent of the countries lack information systems on land degradation and this, coupled with the absence of accurate land degradation diagnostic, contributes to the poor monitoring and evaluation of land-degradation processes in the region.

71. The advanced NAP countries have developed specific diagnostics related to land degradation as part of their implementation process and have in general well organized information systems including desertification maps.

72. Several articles of the Convention refer to the need to develop monitoring systems on indicators of land degradation and desertification. In this regard, the UNCCD secretariat provided support for three regional conferences in Latin America and the Caribbean for the development of methodologies on indicators. It has also provided support for an informal consultative meeting at the International Development Research Centre at Ottawa, Canada, in July 1997. One result of this group's work was: "Elements for a method to determine impact indicators" (see ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1). As a result of these events, a joint effort undertaken by five countries of the region, aimed at the identification of a unified methodology on indicators, has developed a group of environmental, biophysical and socio-economic indicators. The general idea is that this experience will be spread to the entire region. In this sense, the regional project proposal "Selection of indicators and development of methodologies to evaluate and monitor desertification at the national level" is an initiative that should be developed and implemented. A project being developed between Brazil and Chile called "Indicators: Model for drylands" is also an ongoing initiative in this area.

73. The countries' reports as regards benchmarks and indicators on land degradation can be divided into those that have an active process of developing indicators, those that have not systematized the process and those that have not started the development of indicators. The NAP-advanced countries have developed indicators to measure progress with implementation.

74. Some Parties stressed the importance of considering the need for indicators and monitoring systems during the development of National Action Programmes.

75. The measurement of the conditions and state of health of ecosystems (natural forest cover, water quality, bio-diversity loss and soil degradation) are some of the physical-biological indicators taken into consideration by the region. Although some countries also stress the importance of including socio-

economic indicators, such as health problems, migration rate and land tenure, the pressure put on ecosystems by the demand for goods and services should also be considered in this area. The pressure-state-response approach for the indicator formulation of land degradation processes can be considered as a conceptual framework for the measurement of changes due to NAP implementation.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED

A. Lessons from the NAP formulation process

76. As regards articles 4 and 5 of the Convention, the national reports reveal a region at different levels of NAP formulation and implementation. Most of the NAP-advanced countries have already secured the political and institutional spaces, as well as the confidence and necessary participation of different stakeholders for the implementation process. These countries act as a catalyst for the less advanced in their respective subregions.

77. Land degradation processes are intrinsically linked to the current high deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, water scarcity and poor water management in the region. Land degradation occurs in all types of ecosystems and climate. The healthy existence of all ecosystems must be protected simultaneously if the degradation processes are to be effectively dealt with. In this sense the need to widen the framework of application of the Convention to all forms of land degradation is most evident.

78. The loss of tons of soil annually is a common feature in the region. In one country alone there is an annual loss of 59 million tons due to erosion. However, in general, countries of the region do not seem to be aware of the importance of measuring the economic impact of erosion. In fact, only one report indicated the economic losses associated with this form of land degradation (US$300 million per year) and estimated that it will require some US$2 billion over a 20-year period to deal with this problem.

79. The majority of the LAC countries consider poverty as a symptom of, and just one link of the causal chain that leads to land degradation. In this sense, the struggle against land degradation must attack the underlying causes of poverty. The direct and underlying causes of land degradation are however considered in some of the reports, and some of the NAPs include activities to address certain causes. Some countries are working to address current land-tenure patterns through the participation and control of resources by local communities and indigenous peoples, as well as land use, sustainable agricultural policies and coordination of land management institutions.

80. The questions of policy coherence between different sectors regarding land degradation, particularly those linked to the finance, trade and macro-economic policies defined under the umbrella of the national development plan (growth strategies), have not been addressed. This analysis is vital for the region if the underlying causes of land degradation are to be addressed and effective solutions found. The role of these issues in the land degradation causation chain needs to be taken into account during the formulation and implementation of the NAPs.

81. The modern approach of a natural resource management model, which includes an integrated ecosystem approach, the establishment of partnerships and a social mobilization approach, should be developed as part of national environmental policies, strategies and plans.

82. Some countries are developing projects related to the use, management and protection of productive lands. Nevertheless, large scale mono-crop cultivation (food crops, cash crops and tree plantations) and its links to land degradation (soil compaction, erosion, salinization, nutrients depletion etc.) is a subject that has not been adequately treated or analysed by most of the countries. If

unsustainable agricultural practices are promoted as one of the main ways of generating foreign exchange to meet the international financial obligations of the region (external debt, credits, loans etc.) it will be difficult to halt the growing trends of land degradation.

83. Synergy among projects designed under the umbrella of the three sustainable development conventions and the IPF/IFF Programmes is still incipient in the region. There is an urgent need to improve the coordination between these sister conventions and Forest Action Programmes. Such coordination is crucial in order to avoid situations where apparent solutions given by one project in the framework of one convention can be adverse for the accomplishment of the objectives of another convention.

84. The implementation of a national land-use policy that includes control and management of land degradation is an urgent priority for several countries of the region.

85. Even if there is general consideration of the land degradation reality by most of the countries through different mechanisms including environmental strategies, laws and policies, the advance of some countries in the Convention process still leads to the conclusion that there is no explicit preoccupation with land degradation. Consequently, there is no proper institutional approach that results in programmes and projects specifically aimed at combating land degradation, with adequate institutional, human and financial resources and with a corporate institutional project to address the general public or the affected population.

86. It is especially important to ensure that sectors outside natural resources and environment areas are fully aware of the relevance of the issues related to land degradation and desertification. All players involved in the economic planning process should be acquainted with the concepts and definitions pertaining to land degradation. Only in this way will the land degradation dimension be incorporated strategically into the national development plans.

87. In the LAC region, each country has already taken the necessary institutional measures, or is planning to do so very soon, to establish their multidisciplinary national coordinating bodies (NCBs) for the creation of their NAPs for future implementation. The focal points are in general the active agents who organize and coordinate these Committees. In some countries the focal points and the coordinator of NCBs are two different persons or are located in different ministries. In these cases it is not clear who has the maximum authority. In order to prevent possible conflict due to this ambiguity there is a need for the countries concerned to deal with this issue.

88. The authority of the NCBs and that of the focal points as regards other sectors is still weak and ambiguous. In general, the environmental sector in the LAC region needs to be enhanced. Economic decisions and priorities take preference over environmental ones. The NCBs and focal points have to be strengthened.

89. Political instability and discontinuity in some cases in the ministries or departments cause changes in the designated CCD focal points. The NCBs are in a delicate situation as they lack legal status. These institutional uncertainties do have adverse effects on the preparation and implementation of NAPs and on the relationships with the international partners. At the beginning of the NAP implementation process the interest of the international partners could be high. But if there is no continuity of activities/programmes due to internal political changes and instabilities, these partners could lose interest and reduce their participation.

90. In the LAC countries there is a noticeable participation of the academic community in NCBs as well as in the formulation and implementation of NAPs.

This important participation must be enhanced and the involvement of academics should permeate the current and planned, local and municipal NCBs.

91. The countries of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) face substantial environmental challenges with limited managerial and technical resources to resolve them. Limited capacity for implementation because of the lack of human resources is a common feature among these country Parties. Because of this lack and the financial constraints, it is common in the Caribbean countries that the same small group of persons (national focal points) handle at the same time all environmental matters, including the various reporting obligations. Capacity-building measures need to be activated urgently in these countries.

92. The entire region is very conscious of the need to promote the active participation of women in the UNCCD process. Countries are taking steps to introduce it in the formulation and implementation of their NAPs as well as in the formation of their National Coordination Committees. There is however a need for greater efforts to introduce the gender balance in the different phases of the NAPs preparation and implementation; this could make more human resources available to the process.

93. Education is crucial to minimizing and eliminating land degradation. Greater efforts should be made to increase awareness of land degradation and drought in all the countries of the region. The channels of formal and informal education should be used. There is a great need to increase, on a consistent basis, public awareness on general environmental issues, particularly on land degradation which is not given the necessary consideration apart from when it is attached to an externally funded project. New tools such as Internet Web sites and electronic networks dedicated exclusively to land degradation should be promoted in the region.

94. Civil society participation particularly of the affected local populations is a key to the implementation of the Convention, but public awareness of this kind is not very high in the region. Urban populations have not yet been sufficiently sensitized as to the meaning, the causes and the consequences of land degradation processes and their links to food security. In some cases there is a belief that the land degradation processes do affect consumption patterns of urban communities. There is a need for the better use of mass media (radio, television and press) to promote national awareness and greater popular involvement.

95. Local communities and the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples are crucial elements to be incorporated and developed through the NAPs implementation process. This emerging trend should be seen as an opportunity to concretize synergy with the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular its article 8(j)[3].

96. Indicators of land degradation as well as indicators of progress on implementation of the NAPs are incipient processes in the region. Some countries are trying to develop these through bilateral and/or subregional initiatives. In the development of indicators for the UNCCD process, indicators currently under use in other international environmental agreements should be

---

[3] Article 8(j): (j) Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices;

considered. There is an urgent need to develop and implement the regional project on indicators.

97. In many cases the existing environmental legislation is outdated and is hardly enforced in many countries of the region. There is a need to upgrade the legislation and pass new laws to support the fight against land degradation.

98. The formulation and implementation of NAPs by all countries of the region are contingent upon the availability of resources. Horizontal cooperation, such as the ongoing Platform for Cooperation between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, gives hope for the region in terms of resolving the financial and technical problems.

B. Lessons from the national reporting system

99. The Help Guide distributed by the secretariat to the countries of the region provides the terms of reference for the preparation of national reports. This framework, which was observed by all the countries, facilitated the synthesis and allowed the identification of common and emerging trends.

100. Several countries made an extended description of their geographical particularities. This could be resolved by attaching to the national report a country profile duly reflecting its specific features: geographical localization, bio-diversity, forests, climate, rainfall patterns, geology etc.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

101. It is recommended that the Conference of the Parties be invited:

(a) To receive the first national reports submitted by the Latin American and Caribbean region;

(b) To consider the needs, challenges and opportunities both financial and technical, identified by the Latin American and Caribbean Parties, and to take the necessary action to assist in addressing the same.

Annex I

COUNTRY PARTIES THAT SUBMITTED THEIR NATIONAL REPORTS

Country Party	LAC Region Ratification date	Date of submission of National Reports
1. Antigua and Barbuda	June 6, 1997	May 08, 2000
2. Argentina	January 6, 1997	April 25, 2000
3. Barbados	May 14, 1997	May 05, 2000
4. Belize	July 23, 1998	May 11, 2000
5. Bolivia	August 1, 1996	April 25, 2000
6. Brazil	June 25, 1997	April 19, 2000
7. Chile	November 11, 1997	April 26, 2000
8. Colombia	June 8, 1999	April 25, 2000
9. Costa Rica	January 8, 1998	May 11, 2000
10. Cuba	March 13, 1997	April 12, 2000
11. Dominica	December 8, 1997	April 13, 2000
12. Dominican Republic	June 26, 1997	April 18, 2000
13. Ecuador	September 6, 1995	April 25, 2000
14. El Salvador	June 27, 1997	May 2, 2000
15. Grenada	May 28, 1997	April 20, 2000
16. Guatemala	September 10, 1998	April 27, 2000
17. Guyana	June 26, 1997	April 26, 2000
18. Haiti	September 25, 1996	April 25, 2000
19. Honduras	June 25, 1997	May 18, 2000
20. Jamaica	November 12, 1997	April 28, 2000
21. Mexico	April 3, 1995	May 2, 2000
22. Nicaragua	February 17, 1998	April 26, 2000
23. Panama	April 4, 1996	April 19, 2000
24. Paraguay	January 15, 1997	April 19, 2000
25. Peru	November 9, 1995	April 26, 2000
26. St. Kitts and Nevis	June 30, 1997	May 12, 2000
27. Saint Lucia	July 2, 1997	May 2, 2000
28. St. Vincent and the Grenadines	March 16, 1998	April 25, 2000
29. Uruguay	February 17, 1999	May 23, 2000
30. Venezuela	June 29, 1998	May 2, 2000

Annex II

STATUS OF NATIONAL FORUMS/WORKSHOPS

Country	Date of National forums
1. Antigua and Barbuda	April 1998, National awareness Workshop
2. Argentina	During 1996 to 1997 they have organized 40 local workshops with a participation of 2000 representatives.
3. Barbados	May 31 - June 1, 1999, First national workshop
4. Belize	
5. Bolivia	April 2000 National validation workshop of the national report/Several workshops for the NAP formulation have been done between 1994-1997 (example: 25-28/10/94 with 86 participants) (17-20/01/95 with 72 participants)
6. Brazil	
7. Chile	
8. Colombia	February 10-11, 2000 First National consultation workshop
9. Costa Rica	January 1999, Awareness National Workshop
10. Cuba	November 23-24 1995 and March 28-29, 2000 (National Consultation)
11. Dominica	June 1999 (national workshop) and March 2000 (National Consultation)
12. Dominican Republic	March 29, 2000 First National Awareness Consultation
13. Ecuador	February 25-26, 1997 First National workshop/ August 16-17, 1999 Second National workshop
14. El Salvador	February 23-24, 1998 First Awareness Meeting/ October 29-29 1999 Second Awareness Meeting
15. Grenada	March 29, 2000 First meeting of the National Steering Committee (NSC)
16. Guatemala	1997 First National Workshop/April 2000 Validation national report workshop
17. Guyana	Being planned
18. Haiti	June 2000, National Seminary to Combat Desertification
19. Honduras	
20. Jamaica	March 30-31 2000, First Awareness workshop/ April 20th Review Workshop
21. Mexico	1998 National Forum on Desertification and Poverty
22. Nicaragua	May 15, 1998 First National workshop/ May 6, 1998 First National Civil Society meeting about the Convention/April 2000 National Desertification Workshop
23. Panama	October 28, 29 and 30 1997/March 22 and 23, 2000/March 28 and 29, 2000
24. Paraguay	Being planned
25. Peru	Since 1996 several local, national and regional workshops have been organized
26. St. Kitts and Nevis	Being planned
27. Saint Lucia	March 2000, National consultation
28. St. Vincent and the Grenadines	April 12, 2000 First National consultation
29. Uruguay	
30. Venezuela	April 10-11, 2000, National workshop for the National report elaboration

PART TWO: PROGRESS MADE IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

I. INTRODUCTION

102. In the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) it is stated, in article 26, that "Each Party shall communicate to the Conference of the Parties for consideration at its ordinary sessions, through the Permanent Secretariat, reports on the measures which it has taken for the implementation of the Convention."

103. According to decision 5/COP.2, the country Parties of the Latin America and the Caribbean region should present their national reports at the fourth session of the COP.

104. According to decision 11/COP.1, information from country Parties may be complemented with the corresponding information on subregional and regional activities. Consequently, the secretariat of UNCCD, with the assistance of its Regional Coordinating Unit for Latin America and the Caribbean, based in Mexico City, has prepared this report on activities in that region.

105. In preparing this report, use was made of documents provided by the secretariat and its Regional Coordinating Unit. Other information was provided by the main entities and individuals involved in all activities as well as some Focal Points in the region. The reports of the five regional meetings for Latin America and the Caribbean, those of the Conference of the Parties and the last three meetings of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean were also consulted. The secretariat OF UNCCD appreciates the financial support provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for consultation and for the compilation and systematization of the information.

II. BACKGROUND

106. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean has an area of 20.18 million km^2, with 5.27 million km^2 of this area being dry lands, 70 per cent of which are vulnerable and in an advanced stage of desertification.

107. The general lack of integrated planning in Latin America and the Caribbean in the areas of irrigated agriculture, pastures and forests favours the advance of the physical and biological degradation of ecosystems. The rural population in many countries of the region is more than 60 per cent, which indicates that they depend principally on livestock and forestry activities and, where there is no planning of soil use, there is danger of an increase in desertification.

108. Although the majority of the 33 countries of the region do not have significant areas of dry lands, 6 of them face severe drought problems and have to cope with vast areas of dry lands. Moreover, all the countries face serious land degradation problems affecting the poor, causing extreme poverty and unacceptable marginalization, and annual losses of up to US$2 billion.

109. The land degradation phenomenon in Latin America and the Caribbean may be characterized in the following way:

- There are 250 million hectares of land affected by desertification in South America;

- There are 63 million hectares affected by desertification in Mesoamerica;

- Soil erosion is the main threat (68 per cent in South America and 88 per cent in Mesoamerica of the total land area affected in each subregion);

- In South America, 100 million hectares of land have been eroded due to deforestation and 70 million by overgrazing;

- In the Caribbean, accelerated and badly planned urbanization has resulted in the loss of agricultural lands and biodiversity, and to the non-protection of watersheds;

- Land degradation has caused migration towards cities in search of new opportunities, which affects the most vulnerable sector of the population, i.e. women and children;

- Drought and desertification have resulted in poverty, disintegration of social structures and economic instability;

- Total losses due to desertification in the region could reach up to US$2 billion per year;

- UNEP figures show there is need for investment of US$13 billion to restore the degraded lands of the region.

110. The country Parties in Latin America and the Caribbean have been developing a series of actions that show their commitment to the implementation of the Convention. This commitment is expressed by the following factors among others:

- The number of ratifications/accessions by countries of the region: 32 countries have already ratified or acceded to the Convention;

- Significant participation in the process of negotiating the text of the Convention, the development and approval of the Regional Implementation Annex and cooperation with other regions in the elaboration of similar instruments;

- Institutional strengthening and the adoption of a regional action programme that identifies the priorities in the fight against desertification, the establishment of a regional coordinating unit and the creation of a regional executive committee that evaluates and follows up activities identified as priorities by country Parties of the region;

- Development of a platform of interregional cooperation between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean that promotes cooperation, the exchange of information, experiences, and technical and scientific knowledge for the implementation of the Convention in both regions;

- Hosting of regional and subregional meetings with the aim of identifying priorities and strategies, work plans, areas of cooperation and follow-up to the implementation of the Convention in the region;

- Wide participation of non-governmental organizations, and of local and indigenous communities in the implementation of activities within the framework of the Regional Action Programme (RAP);

- The UNEP prize "Saving the Drylands" given in recognition of the work carried out by five countries of the region, for their achievements and successes in the prevention of land degradation and the fight against desertification.

111. All countries of the region have their focal point. In most cases, the preparation of national action programmes has already started even if the degree of integration into national development policies varies between countries.

112. There is a marked increase in the participation of civil organizations, particularly those within the International Network of Non-Governmental Organizations to Combat Desertification (RIOD), in various local initiatives and in the follow-up to Convention activities especially since the Regional Meeting of NGOs held in Ica, Peru, in 1996.

113. The present report discusses in brief the progress made and concludes with proposals for strategies to achieve more efficient implementation of the Convention through the implementation of national and subregional programmes, and the Regional Action Programme.

III. SUMMARY OF REPORTS ON THE PROGRESS OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

The progress of subregional action programmes and the Regional Action Programme

114. The multiple changes in governments had its impact on the formulation and development of subregional action programmes (SRAPs), influencing the continuity of activities and commitments. Nevertheless, the initiatives in all cases continue to be implemented, although not at the desired speed.

115. Worthwhile efforts were made to formulate and implement SRAPs and the Regional Action Programme (RAP) notwithstanding the financial limitations and the institutional capacity deficiencies in various countries of the region.

116. An important limitation in the implementation of the Convention in the region is the limited space for manoeuvring of the majority of the delegations and focal points representing country Parties, as well as the frequent changing of focal points.

117. At the same time, there are favourable conditions for implementation of the Convention, such as the decision adopted by the Ministers of the Environment to pay special attention and support to the problems caused by desertification for the following reasons:

- Its importance to the well-being of the people living in the affected areas;
- The external effects of desertification;
- The linkages between desertification and other issues such as biodiversity, water regimes and climate change;
- The importance of mitigating the effects of droughts and floods caused by meteorological phenomena, such as global warming, the effects of which are augmented by the poor conditions of watersheds and improper land management.

Subregional action programmes

118. The Third Regional Meeting (Cuba, July 1997) decided to establish the following subregions: South America with 6 country Parties, (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Guyana, Paraguay, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay); the Andean subregion, with 5 country Parties (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela); the Caribbean, with 11 country Parties (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines) and Mesomerica, with

8 country Parties (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama).

119. The countries concerned have identified nine SRAPs and/or subregional projects establishing priorities and covering transboundary implementation.

120. The execution of the SRAPs is incipient, with the exception of the Gran Chaco Americano Project. That project has completed an important process of consultation, proposal elaboration and institutional arrangements that is of great significance for the region.

Regional action programmes

121. The RAP was conceived and formulated at the different regional meetings held during the meetings of the International Negotiating Committee for the Convention prior to COP 1, as well as at the three sessions of the COP. The RAP was approved by decision 1 of the Third Regional Meeting, and it includes nine regional projects. The specific project profiles and initiatives considered important by the country Parties were subsequently determined and added.

122. The RAP is, in a strict sense, based on partnership in accordance with the principles of the Convention. It is comprised mainly of projects aimed at providing the region with instruments for the coordination and improvement of national capacities for the implementation of the Convention, through the formulation and application of NAPs.

123. The majority of the projects of the RAP lack financial support. However, some of them have started to show signs of dynamism.

IV. PROGRESS OF SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

Gran Chaco Americano Project and mechanisms of institutional cooperation between member countries

124. The Gran Chaco Americano Project covers a vast region extending over areas of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, with natural resources characterized by their fragility, and a relatively scarce, poor and marginalized population. Given the multiplicity of transnational relations existing in the region, the Governments of the three country Parties decided to embark within the framework of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change coordinated in a SRAP, on action to improve the living conditions of the population and to protect the natural resources and biodiversity present.

Areas of cooperation covered by the programme and measures adopted or planned

125. The consultations undertaken resulted in a work plan covering different themes, subjects and activities as follows:

- Collecting, characterizing and systematizing information;
- Planning actions to mitigate and reverse the processes of degradation;
- Reversing migration, marginalization and poverty;
- Promoting the use of appropriate technology for sustainable development;
- Developing common strategies that facilitate the sustainable use of shared natural resources;
- Strengthening technical and scientific cooperation, and creating information networks;

- Measuring local capacities;

- Encouraging the harmonization of relevant public policies.

126. Up to May 2000, a number of activities were held, directed at the following:

- The creation of a provisional executive committee to coordinate action and link the countries participating in the SRAP;

- The establishment of norms and working procedures and the nomination of responsible officials in each country;

- The preparation of an agenda for the SRAP;

- The establishment of procedures for characterizing, formulating and managing corresponding projects;

- The creation of a facilitation fund.

Consultations for the preparation and implementation of the SRAP and partnership agreements concluded with developed countries and other interested parties

127. The proposal and formulation of the Gran Chaco Americano SRAP benefited from a rich consultation process. Among the most relevant activities were:

- The initiatives of direct action by non-governmental organizations and local officials;

- The Tenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (Argentina, November 1996) at which the SRAP was approved;

- The agreement of the three country Parties to implement the project, taken during the Second Regional Meeting of the Convention to Combat Desertification (Mexico, June 1996);

- The refining and concretization of the SRAP, which was later proposed for adoption by the government representatives of the country Parties represented at the regional meetings, held in Asuncion, Paraguay, March 1997, and Resistance, Argentina, May 1997. National, departmental and state governments, the private sector, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations participated in the meetings;

- The hosting of the First Subregional Forum for the launching of the Gran Chaco SRAP (Argentina, May 2000).

Financial resources granted to the affected countries for the implementation of SRAP and technical assistance received or needed

128. This project received a contribution of US$60,000 made by the Spanish Government, through the UNCCD secretariat, to cover travel expenses and logistics for hosting awareness and coordination meetings.

129. The United Nations Development Programme Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNDP-UNSO) supported the formulation of the initiative, methodology, consultation process and creation of a work programme for the SRAP. Special mention should be made of its role as adviser in the establishment of the Facilitation Fund, which is currently being negotiated.

130. The Gran Chaco SRAP is very complex, due to its holistic approach to the regional sustainable development. This is the reason why, once the SRAP and its

components have been formulated, it is necessary that the governments of the country Parties, in the first place, and international cooperation support the initiative.

Subregional Action Programme for Sustainable Development of Puna Americana

131. The Puna is a geographical region characterized by conditions of aridity, risk of land degradation, low productivity and the poor quality of life of its inhabitants. It is common to extensive areas of the high mountain ranges of the Andes, in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru. The affected countries in the area started activities for the implementation of a subregional programme within a conceptualized regional framework for sustainable development.

132. One of the conditions which give the regions their homogeneity regardless of national frontiers is the whole set of peculiarities which exist in the Puna American, where natural resources are limited and have caused poverty, migration and marginalization. This is the reason why the countries sharing these characteristics agreed to the implementation of joint action through a subregional action programme.

Areas of cooperation within the programme and measures adopted and planned

133. As a result of previous consultations, the delegates of the five country Parties with sponsorship from UNDP-UNSO agreed during the Third Regional Meeting, (Cuba, March 1997), to start a subregional process for the formulation and implementation of the SRAP and to proceed by:

- Establishing a sustainable development programme to complement the implementation of the National Action Programme of each country and to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of the local population;

- Designing the SRAP with a definite framework and through the following activities: exchange of information, promotion of the participation of community youths, indigenous people and women, application of adequate technologies for the specific conditions of the region and its population, and the promotion of traditional knowledge, practices and techniques;

- Formulating for each country specific actions in the general framework adopted;

- Exchanging initial proposals prepared for review during the second subregional meeting;

- Presenting the programme during the second Conference of the Parties of the Convention (Dakar, November 1998) to obtain financial and technical support;

- Establishing an executive secretariat for coordinating the first phase of the programme. The National Forestry Corporation of Chile will carry out this function.

The process of consultations in the preparation of the Subregional Action Programme and partnership agreements between developed country Parties and other interested parties

134. During the negotiation meetings prior to COP 1, the country representatives, together with UNDP-UNSO, with the aim of obtaining ideas on the feasibility and content of a SRAP for the Puna Americana, carried out a process of consensus building at different levels (governmental, non-governmental and academic).

135. In June 1998, the representatives of the country Parties involved, the secretariat of the UNCCD, UNDP-UNSO and RIOD met in Santiago de Chile and adopted the necessary decisions to speed up the formulation process and the ultimate implementation of the SRAP.

136. A process of consultation is presently being carried out to establish the terms of reference of the project and those for the participation of country Parties and agencies of cooperation.

SRAP in Mesoamerica

137. Due to the severe and recurring disasters in the isthmus of Central America, COP 2 manifested its support to the countries affected by these phenomena and requested the agencies and the developed country Parties to prepare a specific action plan to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of these natural phenomena in this region.

138. UNEP gave technical assistance for the formulation of a project on the sustainable management of watersheds in Central America. The project will run for three years and foresees the preparation of a map of vulnerability as well as planning, training, educational and field activities. This project requires the financial assistance of US$11 million for its realization.

139. The Interagency Technical Committee of the Forum of the Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, comprising representatives from UNEP, UNDP, Inter-American Developing Bank (IDB), the World Bank and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), decided to give technical and financial support for the establishment of a regional environmental unit based in the offices of the System of Integration for Central America in El Salvador. Its task is to coordinate the implementation of environmental initiatives in the region.

SRAP for the small island States of the Caribbean

140. The Caribbean in general and the small insular States of the region in particular frequently suffer the effects of land degradation. Their insular condition and dimension make this a significant risk. At the Fourth Regional Meeting (Antigua and Barbuda, April 1998) the country Parties requested the preparation of a specific programme for this subregion.

Areas of cooperation covered by the programme and measures adopted or planned

141. The programme emphasizes the following priorities: training; public awareness; a general subregional course on desertification; and an analysis of the desertification process in the islands of the Eastern Caribbean.

Consultations for the preparation and implementation of the SRAP and partnership agreements with developed country Parties and other interested parties

142. The secretariat, with the support of the Focal Points and experts, prepared the project: "Protection of Biodiversity and Prevention of Land Degradation in the Small Insular States of the Caribbean". This project has been submitted to the Global Environment Facility for funding. At the same time negotiations are ongoing with the European Union for the formulation and implementation of a specific project on land degradation in the eastern Caribbean.

143. Moreover, the UNCCD secretariat, with the support of the IDB, commissioned a study on "The Impact of Land Degradation on Fragile Ecosystems of the Insular States of Latin America and the Caribbean and Measures for their protection",

which was presented and discussed at the Fifth Regional Meeting (Peru, August 1999).

Cooperation with Haiti and the Hispaniola SRAP

144. At the Caribbean Subregional Meeting held in 1996, the Caribbean country Parties agreed to consider Haiti as a country deserving priority attention. In annex I adopted during the Second Regional Meeting, it was decided to send an urgent mission of technical assistance to Haiti with the aim of helping to start the preparation and execution of its National Action Programme. Later at the Third Regional Meeting, it was decided that Haiti should be given priority in the fight against desertification. This position was confirmed with the adoption of decision 9 at the Fourth Regional Meeting.

145. The UNCCD secretariat assisted Haiti in the preparation of a project concerning the fight against land degradation and the protection of biodiversity, which was presented to the GEF by the Government. It is also in contact with the Global Mechanism and CARICOM to promote concrete action and technical assistance for the country.

146. Due to the difficulties faced by the Haitian representatives in gathering national information and establishing a coordination body, the UNCCD secretariat, based on a decision of the country Parties, organized a mission to that country. Representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and Mexico as well as from the secretariat and RIOD participated in the mission.

147. At the request of the Government of Haiti, the secretariat provided a financial contribution for the establishment of a small coordination unit within the Ministry of Environment in Haiti, to help with the preparation of the National Action Programme and the development of specific projects. The secretariat is currently helping in the preparation of a comprehensive plan of assistance and support for Haiti to combat desertification. This plan includes the search for financial and technical resources from agencies and donor country Parties. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) sent an exploratory mission, following which the Haitian authorities prepared a national profile on desertification, which is the basis for the National Action Programme.

148. The exploratory mission to the island of Hispaniola (September 1997) showed among other things the need to have an integral approach to the island due to the close relations at all levels, especially concerning migration between the countries that share it, namely Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The main existing concern is that the land degradation process in Haiti is advancing and it tends to merge with that in the Dominican Republic.

V. THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

149. Decision number 1 of the Third Regional Meeting, which was later concretized at the Fourth Regional Meeting, formally approves the Regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean. This programme is the result of many consultations and discussions carried out by the country Parties during the first three regional meetings and the sessions of the Negotiating Committee prior to COP 1.

Areas of cooperation covered by the programme and activities realized or planned

150. In accordance with the principle of partnership as promoted by the Convention, the RAP facilitates coordination, the joint search for opportunities for technical and financial cooperation, mutual horizontal support and exchange of information. Apart from this, the following priority activities have been defined:

- Project on indicators and benchmarks for monitoring desertification;

- Creation of an information network (DESLAC);

- Project for the explicit introduction of a gender perspective in the implementation of programmes to combat desertification;

- Project for the harmonization of public policies;

- Project for the recovery and promotion of traditional knowledge and technology in Latin America and the Caribbean;

- Project for local, national and regional actions in education to combat desertification;

- Project on training to combat desertification;

- Establishment of a regional system for investment management to combat desertification;

- Horizontal cooperation to combat desertification.

Consultative process to support the preparation and implementation of the programme and partnership agreements

151. The hosting of the regional meetings facilitated an intense exchange of ideas, which was conducive to the precise identification of priority projects to advance the Convention. Apart from the approval of RAP as the framework plan, each project has its own dynamics. The secretariat and the chairpersons of the executive committees have been working so that agencies, foundations, private enterprises and donor country Parties will support these projects, but there has been little result thus far. The development of the projects of the RAP is summarized below:

Project on benchmarks and indicators for monitoring desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean

152. The project to create a unified system of indicators became part of the Regional Action Programme after the Third Regional Meeting at which it was approved. A work plan was presented by some country Parties to the IV Regional Meeting and it was decided to continue the work according to that plan.

153. The Governments of Brazil, Chile and Mexico, with support from UNEP and the Natural Heritage Institute, prepared a project proposal to serve as the basis for the measurement of desertification, taking into consideration causes, current state and consequences. The project is based on the pressure-state-response approach containing benchmarks for planning the fight against desertification and allows for transparency of action. These benchmarks can be used at various levels with possibilities for comparison and follow-up of measures taken against global or continental desertification, as well as of smaller geographical areas: national, state or departmental, municipal and community.

154. Once the Regional Meeting had approved the project, a first version of the methodology was prepared and reviewed during the Workshop on Methodology (Mexico, February 1999), held with financial support of GEF. The basic agreements to set up local pilot projects in these three country Parties were reached at this meeting.

155. The planned measures are aimed at obtaining useful field experiences in different conditions and country Parties for selecting benchmarks, indexes, indicators and to design a unified system of indicators that can be applied in

country Parties with greater capacity as well as in those suffering greater technical and institutional deficiencies.

156. The further development of the database is planned in collaboration with the GTZ-ECLAT. This will allow the recovery of information in an aggregated or specific way, which can be consulted and administered through the regional system of information. The development of national systems of consultation is also planned.

Information Network to Combat Desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean

157. At the Workshop of the Network of Arid Zones sponsored by the FAO (Patagonia, November 1995), the need to have an expeditious means of communication between participants of this Network was highlighted and it was agreed to examine ways of organizing a mechanism of this kind. Some months later, during the First Regional Meeting of the Convention, this agreement became part of a draft for an action programme for the region, since various participants in the Information Network to Combat Desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean (DESELAC) acted as focal points for the Convention.

158. At the Second Regional Meeting proposals were made to set up an information and communication system. The Meeting requested the continuation of work on the definition of a project profile, taking into account a format for autonomous national de elopment with networks for sharing information as well as some basic agreements to make the information systematized by each country compatible.

159. The Regional Action Programme adopted at the Third Regional Meeting included the above-mentioned Information Network. At the same time, the secretariat was requested to formulate a project to be presented to potential donors. This project was approved at the Fourth Regional Meeting.

160. DESELAC was conceived as a system of information, coordination and communication for actors and observers in the fight against desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean. It comprises the following:

(a) Databases on human, physical, institutional, technical and financial resources;

(b) General information and basic official documents for dissemination and information to help in decision-making;

(c) Infrastructure to carry out coordination activities and distance conferencing, mainly through a mailing list, electronic forums for consultation, and moderated and non-moderated electronic conferences.

161. DESELAC is a dynamic and decentralized action programme, which needs minimum infrastructure and central staffing. Moreover, DESELAC promotes the creation of national networks, their use and management, and the creation of national capacities for the establishment of active nodules in the country Parties and for their connection to the project.

162. DESELAC has received the financial and logistical support of the secretariat of the Convention, UNEP and the German Government, and has received a contribution from the Government of Argentina. A number of activities have been undertaken:

(a) Consultations to obtain the financial support for the regular and full operation of the project;

(b) Development of a Web page installed on the server of the Regional Office of UNEP in Mexico City;

(c) Regular publication of the electronic bulletin "Newswire";

(d) Organization and hosting of online conferences;

(e) Realization of a moderated electronic conference on desertification and the fight against poverty in coordination with Fidamérica and the Global Mechanism;

(f) A study on national capacities for the establishment of national networks carried out by the secretariat with assistance from the Regional Coordinating Unit;

(g) The Development under the guidance of Riod-Mexico of a photographic archive, financed by UNEP and the Ford Foundation;

(h) The Creation in collaboration with FAO, the University of Arizona and a consortium of institutions of a global database on institutions and organizations involved in the implementation of the Convention;

(i) Establishment through e-mail of an information exchange system.

163. It is hoped that 11 national nodules of DESELAC will be created in the coming months. This will allow for a greater exchange of information, the development of national networks with local nodules and the development of new national networks through mechanisms of horizontal cooperation.

164. Ninety per cent of the countries of the region and more than 200 experts, focal points and other actors working to combat land degradation are involved in the programme.

Explicit Incorporation of a Gender perspective in the fight against desertification

165. As with other environmental concerns, steps will be taken to consider, in the context of the Convention, the need to introduce a gender perspective that permeates the activities and the perception of the problems of desertification and its solutions. This subject was discussed, among others, at the First Latin American Assembly for Rural Women (Brazil, November 1997).

166. At the Third Regional Meeting, an NGO representative pointed out the lack of an explicit incorporation of a gender perspective and that it was not included in the Regional Action Programme. At the Fourth Regional Meeting, it was proposed that a project related to this subject should be included in the Programme. This was approved at the Fifth Regional Meeting.

167. This project tries to convert into concrete action and commitments the reiterated favourable declarations on the adoption of a gender perspective as regards efforts for development, the fight against poverty, the general conservation of natural resources and the regional projects and in particular National Action Programmes to combat desertification.

168. The project is in a pilot phase with four participating country Parties. Its components are: conceptual development; analysis and identification of investment initiatives; election of participating country Parties, with preference to those who have already initiated action in this field; definition of the responsibilities of national institutions; and reformulation of programmes and projects for the inclusion of a gender perspective.

169. The planned activities are as follows: awareness raising; preparation of capacity-building materials and their distribution; identification and enabling of national capacities for the promotion of the gender focus; seminars; and training promoters.

170. There are different ongoing activities in the region, such as the bilateral Argentina-Chile project in the Atacama-La Rioja-Catamarca micro-region. Similarly, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in collaboration with non-governmental organizations is supporting an initiative for the establishment of promotional units in environmental bodies, governmental and non-governmental.

Harmonization of public policies and desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean

171. The country Parties of the region have discussed the issue of adequate policies at every regional meeting. At the Third and the Fourth regional meetings, the country Parties requested the support of the UNCCD secretariat in preparing a project aimed at establishing a regional framework for the revision of policies and relevant instruments, and in carrying out this exercise in a coordinated manner. This project was presented, discussed and approved as a priority at the Fifth Regional Meeting. At COP 2, the Global Mechanism, the UNCCD secretariat, UNEP, UNDP, FAO, IDB and IFAD committed themselves to supporting the project and suggested the guidelines. The Regional Coordinating Unit prepared a new version of the project with the same goals as those of the version approved at the Regional Meeting in Lima, and with a proposal from the list of participating country Parties to the supporting bodies, which is presently being considered.

172. With a pilot project centred on six country Parties, the Project on Harmonization of Public Policy (PHPP) uses the experience of a preliminary evaluation done in Mexico in 1998 and joins, through regional workshops and DESELAC, six autonomous exercises in each participating country. In the first year, the country Parties will carry out evaluation exercise mostly with decision makers, as well as national and international studies. The linking of the project with developing agencies creates favourable conditions for the immediate application of the results of the exercise. PHPP intends to mobilize existing and complementary resources through reorientation and cost-effective measures with minimum financial investment.

Project to enhance and promote traditional knowledge and technology in Latin America and the Caribbean

173. The regional meetings have discussed and adopted declarations and decisions with the aim of advancing the creation of an effective programme on traditional knowledge and technology. By decision 12 adopted at the Fourth Regional Meeting, the countries concerned requested the secretariat to formulate a pertinent project, which was adopted by the Fifth Regional Meeting. Argentina and Cuba presented a regional report on this subject, which was prepared with information received from the countries concerned, to the ad hoc Panel held at Materra, Italy, in July 1999. The conclusions were presented at the third session of the Committee on Science and Technology during COP 3.

174. The project to enhance and promote traditional knowledge and technology deals primarily with activities in various countries and is a long-term proposal collecting reiterated ideas of recognition of the value of traditional culture of the population in the affected areas as well as the dynamic processes of the synchronized adaptation of technology developed in research centres. The recognition and use of the popular culture in the creation of technological solutions, of mechanisms for the transmission of knowledge or for the development and strengthening of community institutions for regulating the access and use of resources is consistent with the spirit of partnership contained in the Convention. Activities aimed at strengthening knowledge of, and the distribution and application of those assets existing in the countries of the region are important. This approach underlines the importance of community participation as well as the training and institutional strengthening

to achieve results that are sustainable over the long-term including intra-community, municipal, regional, governmental or non-governmental sectors.

175. The project has the following components:

(a) Research activities, innovation and application, inventories, selection, tests and monitoring;

(b) Concepts and materials relating to traditional knowledge and technology included in the plans, programmes and materials of the educational system at different levels; production of informational material, diffusion through the mass media, training, review of educational plans and programmes;

(c) Creation and strengthening of institutions;

(d) Evaluation and reform of public policies in a legal-normative framework;

(e) Development and strengthening of cooperation and exchange mechanisms; incorporating the theme in the NAP and in development programmes.

Local, national and regional action to combat desertification through education

176. The countries of the region have identified a deficiency in public information as regards matters related to desertification. That is why the educational issue represents one of the most urgent tasks in the implementation of the Convention. Consequently, it has been included as a priority in the RAP and the Fourth Regional Meeting approved (decision 13) a proposal of activities on this issue.

177. The project seeks to address the marginal and elementary state of knowledge and awareness of the processes that lead to desertification. The main strategy is to increase the number of monitors or trained agents able to prepare groups of people who have knowledge of the concepts, methods and activities of the UNCCD. It is a progressive plan that has three levels of complexity: elementary, intermediate and advanced according to the degree of preparation of the trainee. The project proposes training for trainers and the production of adequate educational material with a basic common regional content and with specific aspects for each country.

Training

178. The region has accumulated vast experience in the management of natural resources and other subjects of interest in the fight against desertification, although through non-coordinated initiatives. One of the main activities that has been successfully realized is a series of six courses on desertification, organized under the auspices of UNEP and subsequently in conjunction with FAO and other national and international bodies. The participants gave different appraisals as to the effectiveness of training activities and agreed to design a new scheme that will include the work already undertaken. For this reason a meeting was held on the topics and characteristics that could be included in a training programme.

179. This project, which is complementary to the project on education, is aimed mainly at providing conceptual and instrumental tools to experts who are working directly in the fight against desertification. Its organization will be carried out through a programme with 31 training themes in four areas: production systems; natural resources management; management of plans, programmes, projects and policies; and various topics (development of social capital, the fight against poverty, a gender perspective). Four courses of three or four weeks duration and based on the above-mentioned topics will be held over a two-year

period. These will include seminars, workshops, training courses and other planned activities.

Establishment of a regional system for investment management to combat desertification

180. The First, Second and Third Regional Meetings developed a scheme for the mobilization of economic resources for the implementation of the Convention at the regional, subregional and national levels through the improvement and systematisation of proposals, an increase of flow of information and follow-up activities. At the Fourth Regional Meeting the country Parties approved the project planned by the secretariat at their request.

181. The project has the following aims: establishment of a bank of projects; realization of a preliminary feasibility study and integration of a portfolio of ideas and investment profiles; organization of training courses, instalment of hardware equipment and development of an information system that could be installed within the DESELAC; organization of a workshop with cooperating agencies to review the portfolio and adapt proposals to the mandate and legal framework of each agency; and organization of negotiation missions by the Regional Coordinating Unit to promote financing of the projects.

182. For the mobilization of funds, the project also has the following aims: analysis and survey of funds that can be used for the RAP and NAPs, and characterization of each source of funding; consultations with the country Parties and financial sources in order to concretize the proposals; promotion of regional, subregional and national funds; and organization of a workshop to finalize the proposal.

Fundamentals for a permanent programme of horizontal cooperation to combat desertification and drought

183. Articles 16 and 18 of the Convention and article 5 of its Regional Implementation Annex for Latin America and the Caribbean establish a form of cooperation which includes the exchange of information and knowledge, as well as direct technical, scientific and financial assistance. Article 7 of the Annex specifically mentions the exchange of information and experience between country Parties. It is on this basis that country Parties requested, during the Third Regional Meeting, the secretariat to prepare a project aimed at promoting and facilitating different activities for cooperation between the country Parties of the region. This project was approved at the Fourth Regional Meeting.

184. This project is not merely a joint programme of activities, it is an agreement between the country Parties and agencies supporting the implementation of the Convention in the region. The proposed scheme foresees meeting certain costs (for example meetings of the Regional Executive Committee, coordination and systematization of activities relating to the RAP projects, and bilateral and multilateral exchanges) as regards the coordination of activities for the implementation of the Convention.

185. The programme will be implemented through an agreement between the country Parties which decide to share the costs. The travel costs as well as those for necessary equipment will be covered by the cooperation agency based on an agreement. The preparation of the budget will be done by the agencies, and the formulation of an anticipated programme will be carried out by the Executive Committee or the competent regional meetings.

186. In the preparation of this programme, previous experiences in this area may be taken into account: the exchange of information between the country Parties in the development of the Gran Chaco project or the missions of

consultants to specific countries to assist them in the preparation of national reports.

Regional Coordinating Unit

187. At the Second Regional Meeting it was decided to accept the offer of Mexico to assist in the establishment of a body to promote the implementation of the Convention in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the offer of UNEP to host it at its Regional Office. The decision to create the Regional Coordinating Unit was taken at the Third Regional Meeting which requested the secretariat to prepare a proposal and work plan, which were approved at the Fifth Regional Meeting. The country Parties of the region presented the RAP and the programme concerning the Unit to COP 1, which welcomed the initiative.

188. The Regional Coordinating Unit is an instrument of the UNCCD secretariat at the regional level and its task is assisting in the implementation of the Convention specifically at the regional, subregional and national levels. The Unit works closely and on a day-to-day basis with national focal points and the representatives of NGOs and community based organizations.

189. The Regional Unit, under the direction of the UNCCD secretariat, is currently undertaking the following tasks:

- Support in the preparation of national reports for the Convention and other official documents;

- Preparation of regional and subregional reports on the implementation of the Convention in Latin America and the Caribbean;

- Technical assistance to country Parties of the region in the development, evaluation and follow up of programmes and/or projects of the Regional Action Programme and subregional activities;

- Development of a photographic database;

- Technical and logistic support for the organization of regional and international meetings;

- Facilitation of exchange of information, and appropriate techniques, technical know-how and relevant experiences at regional level;

- Assistance to focal points in the promotion of capacity-building for implementing activities in the region;

- Follow-up decisions adopted at the UNCCD regional meetings;

- Facilitation of consultative processes for promoting technical cooperation between the focal points of the region;

- Support for the creation of new mechanisms at the national, subregional and regional levels, including desertification funds, to mobilize domestic financial resources for the implementation of the Convention;

- Assistance in the coordination of Networks on thematic programmes and future implementation of the activities recommended by countries of the region.

190. This Unit officially started its activities on 3 August 1999, when the respective agreements of collaboration between the Government of Mexico, UNEP and the secretariat of the Convention were signed. The establishment and functioning of the Unit has been possible thanks to the technical and financial

support of the Governments of Argentina, Chile and Mexico, UNDP/UNSO, UNEP and the secretariat of the Convention.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC LINES

191. Based on the information contained in the national reports prepared by country Parties of the region, as well as the information resulting from the preparation of the subregional and regional reports on the implementation of the Convention in Latin America and the Caribbean, the strategic lines of action given below are recommended as they will enable more effective and coherent implementation of the objectives of the Convention.

Regional Action Programme

192. There have been no significant results at regional level to date due to the fact that many projects could not be implemented because of the lack of resources. The secretariat, the country Parties and the agencies involved should combine efforts and work hard to mobilize the necessary funds which will help the materialization of the projects listed in the present report.

Concrete activities

193. In order to develop the DESELAC programme, it would be necessary to enlarge the network to include secondary and tertiary institutions and other relevant partners. Also, the complete establishment of DESELAC at the headquarters of the Regional Coordinating Unit should be ensured, making sure that it is fully interactive and connected to other networks to increase its informative capacity.

194. The adoption of a unified method for the formulation of benchmarks and indicators for the evaluation of land degradation will allow training and the sharing of experts to promote the production of information, mainly in less developed countries and always on the basis of horizontal cooperation.

195. The use of traditional knowledge, technologies and practices in the region should be increased, taking into account the experiences that have resulted from the work by the experts of the region.

196. The fight against desertification is through awareness and education of all sectors of society in the countries of the region. There is need for this subject to be included on the school curricula with the aim of creating a new relationship between human beings and their environment.

197. The strengthening of cooperation between countries of the region should be realized through bilateral, subregional and regional relationships in which the UNCCD secretariat will have an important coordinating role to play. NGOs and the community-based organizations should also be involved.

198. Women play a fundamental role in the region, which is not sufficiently recognized at the institutional, economic, social, technical and scientific levels. For this reason, following the general trend of including gender perspective in each and all projects to combat desertification in the region is indispensable for the achievement of the objectives of sustainable development.

199. The project on the harmonization of public policies is considered of singular importance for the countries of the region. Although it already has the support of various international agencies it is necessary to continue supporting it as this will provide all countries with know-how regarding vital tools to create the appropriate institutional framework to combat desertification.

200. The Regional Coordinating Unit has a supporting role in complementing the functions of the secretariat at the regional and subregional levels. The RCU will support the efforts of the countries of the region, with the aim of cooperating in meeting the needs of the different national actors and of coordinating the implementation of the RAP on a daily basis. It is therefore necessary that this instrument be strengthened and that the needed resources are available to carry out its work.

Subregional programmes

201. The country Parties involved in the Gran Chaco Americano project have shown a very serious commitment to its implementation. At the same time, the UNCCD secretariat is engaged in mobilizing the resources necessary for the success of the project, but it is vital that all the agencies reinforce their support for the project.

202. The Puna Americana and Mesoamerica subregional projects need major promotion so that the donor country Parties and the agencies will support the efforts for their preparation and move to the execution stage. Due to the fact that both subregions are seriously affected by land degradation there is a need to act as quickly as possible.

203. Notwithstanding the efforts to carry out case studies and the preparation of reports on the impact of land degradation on fragile ecosystems, the Caribbean SRAP needs financial resources and technical support as explicitly indicated at the Fifth Regional Meeting.

204. The particular political conditions which existed in Haiti in the recent past did not allow for progress with the plans of assistance. The hope is that the situation will change so that joint action can proceed in the fight against land degradation.

Focal points

205. Increasing the decision-making capacity of environmental institutions at national as well as international levels in the different forums of the Convention is of crucial importance. This will serve to enhance capacity when implementing activities, managing projects and obtaining technical and financial support. As a consequence of this, the country Parties should:

- Designate focal points with operative capacity and access to the highest levels of decision-making;

- Allow continuity of national representatives to the Conference of the Parties and the regional meetings;

- Encourage the elaboration of studies and the dissemination of official documents produced during the various meetings held in the framework of the Convention;

- Strengthen the coordination between different institutions related to the Convention, and between those and the international actors.

- - - - -